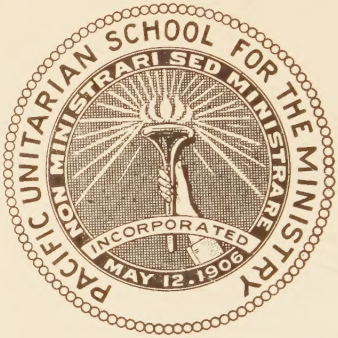

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THE FAITH

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As the Apostle Jude has declared it to be a duty of Christians, *to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;* it becomes us to understand what that faith is, and to consider whether we are doing our duty in this particular. To aid us in this is the design of the following pages.

By the faith once delivered to the saints, we understand the Christian Religion; — those truths which were taught by our blessed Saviour for the instruction, the regeneration, and the salvation of man. If it be inquired what these truths are, we should say they seem to be mainly and chiefly comprised in the following summary.

That there is One Infinite and Eternal Being, the source of all existence, the author of all blessing, the ruler of all worlds, who exercises an unreserved and impartial sovereignty over all beings and events :

That this God is One only, without equal, rival, or partner :

That this Being, infinitely perfect in his moral attributes, maintains a moral government over his creatures,

the end of which is the promotion of the greatest virtue and the greatest happiness :

That man is the subject of this moral government, beneath which he is treated as a free moral agent, capable of choosing between right and wrong, and accountable for his choice :

That in this world he is placed in a state of trial and probation, for the purpose of forming and bringing out his character, in preparation for a final allotment of condition in conformity with his character :

That into this state of preparatory discipline he comes, not with a character already fixed, but with certain rational faculties and moral capacities, in themselves neither good nor evil ; that he himself on entering life is neither virtuous nor vicious, neither holy nor sinful; neither an object of praise nor of blame; but possesses such powers as when developed will render him one or the other, according to the objects to which they become attached and the habits which they form ·

These powers are Reason and Conscience — which approve and lead to goodness; and the Passions and Appetites — which, being connected with sensual objects and present gratifications, incline to self-indulgence and sin :

That man's trial consists principally in the struggle for mastery between these two parts of his constitution, (in the language of Scripture, 'the law in the members and the law in the mind — the flesh and the spirit') and its object is to exalt and purify his spiritual nature, and deliver it from subjection to the sensual :

That in order to aid man in this great struggle — to which from natural infirmities and strong temptations, he was so often found unequal — it pleased God to commission his son Jesus Christ, to communicate all the know-

ledge, encouragement, and aid, and to set before him all the powerful motives, which might be necessary to his success and happiness :

That in the truths and institutions of his gospel, he has made a provision of means, which it is for man himself to use, and which he is left at liberty to use or to refuse; so that none will be saved except through his own exertion, nor will fail except through his own fault:

That these means are, his own instructions as recorded in the Scriptures, and as connected with a previous dispensation; the worship and ordinances of his institution; the spiritual influences granted in answer to prayer; his own life, death, and example, so fitted to affect and influence the heart and character; and the promises and threatenings of future retribution :

That the terms of acceptance to divine favor are, faith in Christ, repentance of sin, and an obedient life ; that future happiness is suspended on these conditions; those who comply with them shall be abundantly rewarded of divine grace, those who hold out against them shall deservedly suffer from the divine displeasure in a future condemnation:

That as man had no claim to this revelation and aid from God, it is to be accounted the free gift of his grace, and therefore those who are saved by the gospel, are saved, not because of their own independent and unassisted righteousness, but by the grace of God ; a grace, which makes merciful allowance for human weakness and imperfection, while it imparts all needed assistance toward accomplishing the great end of man's spiritual improvement and moral perfection.

This view of the system of the divine administration and purposes, as gathered from the Christian Scriptures, may be thus presented in a more naked and compact

form: That there is one God over all — that Jesus is the Son of God, the predicted Messiah —That man is placed here in a state of probation — That the gospel is the final dispensation of religion — originating in the compassion of God for his sinful offspring and founded in the placability of his nature — having for its object to make men holy that they may be happy — establishing as the terms of pardon and acceptance, faith, repentance of sin and obedience of life — using for its means the labors, instructions, and institutions of Jesus Christ — and asserting the sanctions of a future state of retribution.

In this brief summary we have, as we conceive, the substance of the faith once delivered to the saints. We do not profess to have put down all its minute lineaments; but those general and fundamental traits which constitute it what it is, and which cannot be removed or denied without affecting its essential character. It is obviously a plain, simple, intelligible statement, with nothing in it to perplex the understanding, to contradict the judgment of sound reason, or to oppose the kind affections which God has planted within us.

For this system we are to contend — not only because it was once delivered to the saints, and is Christ's saving truth — but because there have prevailed in its place other systems, in many respects different—systems obscure, complicated, mysterious, and less agreeable to the *simplicity which is in Christ.* In contradistinction to them we have sometimes found occasion to denominate this the Rational system—not as arrogating any claim to intellectual superiority in its supporters, for we do not suppose them to possess any; much less as being independent of revelation, or opposed to it, for it is expressly founded on revelation; — but because all the doctrines which it contains are agreeable to right reason, while the opposing

systems are admitted, even by some of their advocates, to be partly made up of doctrines repugnant to human reason. We beg that this explanation may be candidly regarded, when, for the sake of convenience, we use the expression rational system.

The faith, which we thus suppose to constitute the essence of the christian religion, has our deep reverence and strong attachment. We have gathered it from our knowledge of the Scriptures ; we have found it corroborated by the testimony of nature ; we have strengthened our conviction of its truth by reflection and experience ; we have seen its power in the regulation of the affections and the life ; we have tasted its comforts in trial ; and we place our confidence in it to sustain us in death, as we have known it to sustain others, with its cheering assurance of divine mercy and the animation of heavenly hope. How can we fail, then, to feel it a duty to contend for it ? We should esteem ourselves unworthy of its privileges and pleasures, if we were ashamed to confess and vindicate it. We should deserve to be forsaken of its peace, if we should pusillanimously forsake its defence. May God give us wisdom and zeal successfully to maintain the truth which we conscientiously hold.

It will be our present object to bring forward a few of those general considerations which have tended to confirm us in the persuasion, that the system above exhibited is indeed the faith once delivered to the saints. We cannot but think that there is force in them, and that they are calculated to recommend and establish its claims.

1. The plainness and intelligibleness of this system is favorable to its claims.

We hear a great deal in the New Testament about 'the simplicity that is in Christ.' We are told that the gospel was 'revealed to babes,' and 'preached to the

poor.' The language of our Lord is perspicuous, and his instruction concerning the doctrines and duties of his religion easily intelligible. He wrapt up nothing in mystery, except when speaking to the perverse Jews, who were waiting to entrap him. He told his disciples, that to them 'it was given to KNOW *the mysteries* of the kingdom of heaven,' though to the Jews it was not given.—His Apostles also, although, on account of the controversies of the times, they delivered many things hard to be understood; yet in stating the great essential truths and requisitions of the gospel, were always clear and intelligible.

It is evident then, that of two or more systems of faith claiming to be the original faith of the gospel, there is a presumption in favor of the more simple. And this the rather, because there has always been an acknowledged tendency to depart from the simplicity of the gospel. The history of Christianity in every age shows, that this tendency has been a chief source of religious corruption. —Men have been fond of making their religion more imposing than they found it. In the very first age of the gospel, it was esteemed an objection to it with some, that it had no pomp and magnificence, nor hidden and awful mysteries, like the mythological faith of the ancient religions; it was an objection with others, that it was not subtle and profound, like the philosophy to which they had been accustomed in the schools of the Sophists.—Hence sprung the two sorts of corruptions, which flowed in like a deluge upon the church. On the one hand they thought to dignify it and remove what they esteemed its foolishness, by mixing with it their own wise speculations and philosophical subtleties; and on the other hand, they thought to relieve its nakedness by adorning its spiritual worship with the rites, and forms, and incense,

and lustration, and images of their former idolatrous temples. I need not say, how much and how long the church suffered from these abuses. The rational system throws them off, wholly, in principle as well as in form. It tolerates nothing but what is simple. It makes essential nothing but what is plain. These were striking characteristics of the original faith; and they afford a strong presumption in favor of its identity with this.

2. It is a presumption in favor of the claims of the rational system, that it is constituted of articles in which all believers of every name are agreed; it occupies the common ground of Christians.

It will be found, if we mistake not, that the articles we have described are included in the faith of all believers. Others dissent from them rather by certain modifications and additions, than by absolute denial and contradiction. For example — in respect to the great doctrine of the Divine Unity; no Christians deny this doctrine. It is held by all. But some hold it with the *modification* that this One Being is constituted of three persons. So also, that 'Jesus Christ is the son of God,' none deny; but in some systems it is asserted that he is God himself as well as the Son of God. So, also, that man is here placed in a state of probation, is universally allowed. But some receive it in connexion with certain additional doctrines, which greatly affect and modify it. They suppose that he comes into life with a character already fixed — so strongly fixed, that it can be changed only by the power which made him at first; a notion which greatly affects, if it do not destroy, the probationary purpose of life. They suppose also that his final condition of happiness or misery has been already determined by the immutable decrees of God; which seems to leave life without any object, or at any rate makes it difficult to understand how it can be a state of probation.

That the object of the christian dispensation is 'to make men holy that they may be happy,' none deny; it is a proposition to which unanimous assent would be given. But in some systems much is added, of very questionable authority, respecting the mode in which this holiness is attained, and the persons who may attain it. As for example, some insist that it is a divine communication to the soul, an act of sovereign almighty power as great and supernatural as the original creation of the soul; and that none are the subjects of it but those who were appointed to it from eternity, by an irreversible decree of election. They thus, in effect, modify the simple doctrine so as to make the gospel only a mode of ensuring the happiness and holiness of a specified portion of mankind.

Again; that the gospel is founded in 'the placability of God,' none would deny, but all would heartily declare. But in some systems there are found restrictions to the exercise of this placability, which appear essentially to alter its character. It is said, for instance, that God is not able to extend this attribute to sinful man, until a substitute have endured the penalty of his sins. This notion has assumed various forms, and a great deal of metaphysical acuteness has been exercised in making definitions and establishing distinctions. In every form however it seems to be taught, that the placableness of God, or his exercise of mercy in the gospel, depends on his having first received from the Saviour an equivalent to satisfy the demands of justice in regard to the sinner's punishment. Now it appears to us, that a placability thus encumbered and modified, loses its claim to be so called. In the rational system, we admit, because it is revealed, the connexion of the Saviour's sufferings and death, with the extension of pardon and salvation to unworthy man; but we do not pretend to explain or understand fully that connexion. We think it enough to rejoice in the fact,

that the divine mercy is thus exercised, without explaining the secrets of the divine administration, or presuming to say that God cannot, or can, pardon in this or that way.

Similar remarks might be made upon other points; but what we have said may be sufficient for our purpose. Now we acknowledge it to be very natural that men should add to the naked statement of religious doctrines their own conceptions of their import, and mould them to their own feelings and opinions. Men love to explain, and illustrate, and exercise their ingenuity in searching into what is obscure, and discovering what is concealed, and building great systems from small hints. But in doing this, it is plain that the original groundwork would be retained, and would be held in common by all, however different the additions they might make to it. And there is certainly a presumption that this common groundwork, these universal principles, which none have been able to remove or hide, do of themselves constitute the genuine, original system.

3. It is another strong presumption in favor of the rational system, that it is most agreeable to the obvious meaning and general tenor of the New Testament; that is to say, it contains those views of religion, which a plain, serious man, unbiassed by education and unprejudiced by his connexions in the world, would naturally derive from his first careful study of the scriptures. He would state these to be his impressions respecting its contents: That there is but one God, — that he requires men to do his will, — that he has compassion on human imperfection, — that Jesus Christ is his Son, — that by him he has given and promised all needful aid for man's instruction and salvation, — that all, who will, may come to

God through him, and that none who come shall be rejected, — and that the future condition of all will be determined by an equitable judgment according to character. There is no doubt that a man of plain, unbiassed mind, would discern this to be the substance of the faith contained in the New Testament; and that, if he had never heard of it before, it would not occur to him that there are three persons in the one God, or that God has chosen a select few from all eternity and left the rest of mankind without help, or that all are so corrupt on account of Adam's transgression that they can do nothing but sin. The general aspect and complexion of the holy volume would not suggest to him these doctrines. He would find some passages hard to be understood, and some expressions obscure. But he would not think of collecting the meaning of the book from these. He would not judge of any other book by the passages which he could not understand ; — neither will he of this. And whatever some men might learn by refined criticism and ingenious speculation on dark and hidden expressions ; *he* would not doubt that he was right in taking for his guide the plain passages and most definite expressions. Now it is very remarkable, that the rational system is contained in most explicit terms in those portions of Scripture which are plainest, easiest, and most indisputable; while the more complicated systems are gathered, by arguments and inferences, from those portions which are ambiguous and difficult, and which have perplexed thinking men in all ages to interpret them. Can there be a doubt, then, which is likely to be the true system ?

4. It is another presumption in its favor, that the most important corruptions which have crept into the records of our faith, have been of a character to favor an oppos-

ing system; and that the more the Scriptures are restored to the precise words of their writers, the greater is the support which they give to the rational system.

Upon this point a very brief statement will be sufficient. It is familiarly known, that a few verses of the New Testament have been altered since it was written, and do not read in our copies of the Bible exactly as the Apostles wrote them. A great deal of pains has been taken to ascertain their original reading, and it has been found that some of the principal alterations were made for the purpose of supporting the Orthodox faith; that as the Apostles wrote them, they were inconsistent with that faith, and altogether conformable to the rational system. What could be more in favor of that system? The nearer we come to the very words of the sacred writers, the more nearly do they coincide with it. We do not mean that there are many such cases, but what there are, are remarkably to this purpose. And if we choose to take the Scriptures as nearly as possible, word for word and letter for letter, as they came from their holy authors, and to reject whatever changes may have been made in them either accidentally or purposely; then we shall find that the examples I have mentioned, indicate the faith once delivered to the saints to be the faith which we hold.

5. The manner in which this system is for the most part opposed, seems to us to afford another presumption in its favor. It has been by exciting prejudice against it, and preventing free and fair inquiry concerning it.

We of course shall not be understood to say, that this is the only mode of opposition which has been resorted to; for there has been a great deal of profound learning

and manly argument arrayed against it. But the favorite and prevailing method has been to raise an outcry against it, and hinder men from fairly examining it. Hence it has been urgently recommended in religious publications, as well as from the pulpit and in conversation, that men should avoid the worship of Liberal Christians; that they should shun their books as they would poison; that they should not listen to their preaching, or hold any religious intercourse with them. Thus their system is made an object of dread and aversion. But if it were plainly false and erroneous, without foundation in Scripture or fair reasoning, there would be no cause for thus blinding men to it, and preventing their inquiring into its pretensions. This alarm lest men should know anything about it, this eagerness to keep them in ignorance concerning it, and to fill their minds with an unenlightened and superstitious horror of it; seems to indicate an apprehension that its claims are too powerful to be resisted, when understood, and that the only sure way to keep men from becoming converts to it, is to keep them in ignorance of it.

I do not say this tauntingly. I would not use a taunt upon such a subject. I only state what is forced upon my thought by unquestionable facts. There are many examples of men, who have dared—in spite of precaution, obloquy and discouragement — to read, and hear, and think for themselves; and who, by so doing, have come to discard their prejudices, and throw away their superfluous articles, and rest satisfied and happy in the simple doctrines of the rational system. In doing this they have made great sacrifices, which attested their sincerity and conscientiousness;—they have given up friendships, and

reputation, and livelihood, and whatever earthly good is dearest, that they might secure the truth of God and peace to their own souls. It is such instances, proving how dangerous is free inquiry, which have led its opposers to discourage all acquaintance with it, and to secure by prejudice what they dared not trust to argument.

We are aware that any inferences drawn from conversions of this sort are in general to be little depended upon, for probably every sect can produce examples of them. Still we cannot but think that the instances to which we allude, in the preceding paragraph, were attended by circumstances which demand for them, to say the least, a candid consideration. For they are examples of men—not of worldly lives and no religous pretensions, who had adopted their system without knowing anything of its grounds of support, and then left it at last in a period of strong religious excitement, when they became convinced, for the first time, of the importance of personal religon.—But these to whom we refer, were men of long established religious principle, of extensive acquaintance with Scripture truth, of devout habits, and some of them valued and eminent ministers of the gospel. Yet such men,—while still influenced by their long habitual fear of God and attachment to his word—have given up their accustomed faith, and, like the Apostle Paul, have 'preached the faith, which they once destroyed.' When our minds rest on such examples as these, we cannot help deriving from them a feeling, not to say an argument, in favor of our views of truth. It is but a small thing that a man should abandon a system of which he knows but little, and for which he cares not seriously, and with which, especially, he has none of the holy and dear associations of personal and experimental religion.

But that serious and devout men should leave that faith, which they had studied and loved long, and with which all their deepest sentiments of devotion and hope had always been connected—this is a thing to be accounted for. And can we in any way so reasonably account for it, as by believing that what produces this great effect, is indeed the truth of God—which is mighty and will prevail ?

6. A further presumption that this is the faith once delivered to the saints, may be found in the fact, that it is in truth the system adopted by a great portion of those who are educated in another faith, and who have always had another system preached to them. Inquire of them in friendly and confidential conversation the particulars of their faith, let them talk freely, and throw off the disguise of technical phraseology, and declare in t her own language what they believe ;—and you find that they have no idea of any different religious principles from those which we have advanced. After all the pains taken to indoctrinate them, they stand fast by the plain primary principles of gospel truth. Ascertain carefully their opinion respecting the nature of God ; and you find, that when they get beyond the *words*, they have no more notion of three *persons* in the Deity than you have yourself. Describe to them the doctrines of total depravity, election, reprobation, and the kindred tenets, as they are set forth in the confessions and bodies of divinity ; and they count it slander to attribute to them such a faith, they hold it unfair and ungenerous to charge them with maintaining such dogmas. This is a matter of familiar observation. We constantly meet with men who have supposed themselves Orthodox, as it is called ; but who find, on a careful examination of the christian doctrines,

that they are not so. They have held the name and the phraseology, but never embraced the system in its detail, as laid down in the books. Their actual faith has been that of the rational system. Does not this afford a presumption in favor of the truth of that system? since even the powerful influence of education and the weekly expositions of the pulpit, have been unable to displace its simple, reasonable, and comforting truths. What divine power must it not possess, thus to vindicate to itself the assent of multitudes, who have been all their lives instructed in opposition to it!

7. We also find a presumption in favor of this system in the fact, that these are the views of christian truth into which men have been prone to settle down wherever inquiry has been left perfectly free, and no persecution or loss could attend their profession. It has been found in many examples, that when society has been at peace, and the churches have rested without disturbance or fear for any considerable period, there has been a natural and inevitable progress toward this system. So it was at Geneva, once the strong hold of Calvin himself. Being left to pursue the light of truth wherever in God's providence it might lead them, without dread of consequences, the believers of that city gradually softened down the tone of their doctrines, and became the mild and happy professors of the simpler system. So it was in the school of divinity instructed by Doddridge. Beneath that devout and charitable teacher, the young men read and reflected, without fear of reproach or excommunication, and the minds of many of them were opened to the errors of Orthodoxy, and they became advocates of the liberal faith.

And how was it that the liberal system gained so extensive prevalence in Boston and its vicinity? It was by the operation of the same irresistible causes. The churches were for a long period at peace, having none to molest them or make them afraid. They worshipped God quietly, and walked together in charity, provoking one another — not to strife and questions — but to love and good works. Truth has best scope in still waters, and makes most rapid advance where there is no prejudice. And so it came to pass, that the Calvinistic notions, which had long been clinging to the christian system, gradually fell from it, and in the natural progress of things the rational faith prevailed. It was as if a man should sow seed in his field, and sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knows not how — first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. So it would have continued to spread — and its friends would have rejoiced to see the glorious work of the church's regeneration still carried forward by the silent operation of that Providence which does all things thus. But opposition to its progress was awakened, and the whole enginery of creeds, and combinations, and loud outcry were arrayed against it, and the calm elements which had favored its growth, were thrown into stormy convulsions.

The friends of Orthodoxy are so fully aware of this natural tendency of free and unembarrassed inquiry, that they think it necessary to counteract it by strong restrictions. To mention one example — they lay the professors of their seminaries under obligations not to believe, or teach, and sometimes not even to 'insinuate,' anything

inconsistent with certain prescribed articles. And lest, notwithstanding this, a teacher should by any means change an opinion, he is sometimes compelled to renew the obligation every five years! The rational system needs no guards and fetters like this. The Truth does not require to be thus bound.

Other examples like these might be cited. And how can we doubt as to the inference to be drawn? How can we doubt which is most nearly the genuine system, when the one flourishes by violent measures, and is nursed and protected by creeds, and threats, and prejudice—and the other never grows so rapidly and soundly as when the passions are at peace, prejudice and suspicion at rest, and the minds of men left to study God's word and commune with Him, free from all control and apprehension of human judgment?

8. The moral and practical character of this system seems to us another circumstance in favor of its claims. It does not profess to go profoundly into philosophical speculations, or to be very anxiously engaged in unravelling and explaining the secrets of the divine will, and the purposes of the divine decrees. It finds no virtue in schemes of ingenious workmanship, which may have the praise of human logic. It is content with those few simple principles which God has been pleased plainly to reveal, and which have a direct bearing on the momentous concerns of human duty. It is satisfied to know what God requires of us, without making it essential that we should understand all the designs of the divine administration. In regard to them many things are secret and unfathomable. But duty is revealed and unquestionable. Duty therefore makes the chief thing in the rational sys-

tem. To do God's will is thought to be the great and prime consideration. When men have done this, from the right motives, it teaches that they are safe; for there can be no doubt that God will do what he has purposed and promised, whether we understand rightly or not the method and the means.

When we see a system thus exclusively practical, laying its chief stress on obedience to God and conformity to his laws, we cannot hesitate to regard it as the genuine faith. For we see that it tends directly, without circumlocution or delay, to affect that great purpose of man's moral regeneration which it was the object of the gospel to accomplish. It places nothing before that. It makes everything inferior to it. It allows of no substitute for it.

And while we regard it as thus favorable to virtue, we cannot pass without special mention of the graces of charity and candor, to which it is peculiarly favorable, and which, in a manner, may be considered as its own. I know that we have been accused of boasting on this subject, and that we expose ourselves to certain sneers and ridicule if we mention it. But we can repeat, without boasting, that we still believe it to be true. God knows, that, in practice, we are but too deficient in a grace which we so much honor; and that we often exhibit examples of illiberality and uncharitableness wholly at war with our profession. Would that we might be more consistent. But inconsistency with an opinion is no proof that the opinion is false. And, be it remembered, it never has been asserted that all rational christians are charitable, but that the rational system is peculiarly favorable to charity. The reason is this: that, being confined to a few plain articles of essential truth, it is able to allow

and feel, that on other articles men may differ and err, and yet be acceptable and saved. But those who add largely to their list of articles, and hold them all to be essential, of necessity maintain that men cannot innocently differ, and that therefore there is no salvation for those who dissent. Hence the Papal church is exclusive. The Orthodox church is exclusive. They must be so. Their systems require it. The rational system requires the contrary. And if the christian religion make charity the chief grace, which system must be nearest that delivered to the saints — that which makes it impossible to judge charitably of those who err, or that which requires it?

9. It is still another circumstance favorable to the claims of this system, that even unbelievers and men of the world are compelled to look upon it with approbation and respect. It never has been a popular system, because it is too plain and unimposing. But then it is well known that men of inquiring and reflecting minds, who have disbelieved Christianity under some of its forms, have become converts to it under this form; and that even irreligious and worldly men do not withhold from it the expressions of their respect.

This has been accounted for by saying, that it is near akin to infidelity and worldly-mindedness. But candid reflection might suggest a truer cause; it might discern in this a proof of the strong marks which the system bears of divine original and truth — so strong, that they, who have resisted the evidence for Christianity in any other form, have been compelled to assent to it in this; so evidently, conspicuously, and incontrovertibly worthy of God and suitable to man, so undeniably consonant to all the desires and wants of human nature, that skepti-

cism itself cannot doubt, and the veriest worldly-mindedness is compelled to acknowledge and adore. If they do not give it all their hearts, if they will not make sacrifices for its sake, if they will not conform to it, as they ought, in a new life and holier conversation, — yet they cannot deny it the homage of their respect, and dare not pour upon it reviling and contempt. We confess that, however others may feel, we cannot help regarding this circumstance, for our part, as a presumption in favor of its claims; for it coerces, as we may say, the regard of men, who — with this exception — have been disinclined to believe or to honor the religion of Jesus. It verifies the words of Solomon: 'The evil bow before the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.' It reminds us of the days of our Saviour, when it was a signal attestation to his divine authority and power, that even the demons, when they saw him, were made to cry out and acknowledge him.

Being thus persuaded of the divine authority of the faith which we hold, we esteem it our duty to contend for it. We must not suffer our religion to be a matter of indifference to us, but of hearty interest. We must feel it to be important and precious — not merely a good sort of thing, which it is well enough to have, but which also we can do well enough without; but the best of all things, which we can by no means do without; which is dear to us as any of our possessions, and which we are ready to defend and advocate, as we would our property, liberty and life, against any who should assail them.

And truly, if it have enlightened our minds, if it have given us trust in God and access to his favor, if it have

filled us with the sublime and comforting hope of a happy immortality, and raised us above the dread of death, — we should be unfeeling and ungrateful if we did not desire to impart the same to others, if we did not long to pour into their wounds the balm which has healed our own hearts, and provide for them a shelter beneath the everlasting rock which is a covert for ourselves. And if there were any, who could hold this in derision and pour contempt upon it, and defame it in the ears of the world, and drive away those who were coming to it for salvation; we should then be bound—by all our knowledge of its worth, by all our experience of its peace, by all our acquaintance with its sanctifying and consoling influence — we should be bound to stand forth in its defence as if our mother were reviled, and 'contend earnestly' for the jewel of our souls.

Of the various modes in which this duty may be performed, it is not our design to speak. He who is rightly interested in his religion will readily discern by what means he may promote it, and will not fail to use his opportunities of so doing. He will count it no hardship, but a pleasure, to aid the cause of religious education, to be a patron of religious publications, and to cast in his mite for the encouragement of benevolent associations; and, above all, to evince his sense of the worth and excellence of his faith, by its influence over his own life and conversation. We cannot too earnestly insist upon this. Men will judge a doctrine by its fruits. If these be good, not all the malice of its enemies will convince men that the tree is bad. If these be evil, not all the eloquence of its friends will persuade them that the tree is good. The first and most desirable of all things is *personal religion.*

None will believe that we contend for the faith from any good motive, except its light shine in us, and they see our good works. What can it be supposed that we care for the Faith, if we are not ourselves subject to its power? What is the worth of speculative truth held in unrighteousness? What would the world be the better for a correct system of doctrines, if it were consistent with irreligious and immoral practice?

Remember, then, that *the Faith once delivered to the Saints* is — not a barren catalogue of doctrinal truths — but the CHRISTIAN RELIGION — a religion, in its essence and power embraced, we devoutly trust, by all classes of disciples, and dear to every spirit that cares for immortality — a religion, which cannot be monopolized by any one sect, and a true regard for which is to be shown by diligent study to know what it is, and faithful practice to become what it requires.

It is the truth of God, revealed from heaven; of infinite moment to man, because it points out the way of duty and the method of salvation. It is the message of pardon and reconciliation by Jesus Christ; of infinite value to the soul burdened with sin, because it teaches where there is cleansing and acceptance, and how the penitent may be restored to God. It is the promise of eternal life through the divine mercy; of infinite value to the soul that stands trembling on the verge of life, because it lights up the dying eye with the vision of a future world, and sooths the sinking heart with the prospect of eternal rest.

Who then would be ignorant or unconcerned respecting the faith of Christ! Who would not embrace it heartily, live by it scrupulously, and contend for it earnestly!

1st Series. No. 2.

ONE HUNDRED

SCRIPTURAL ARGUMENTS

FOR THE

UNITARIAN FAITH.

SEVENTH EDITION.

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SCRIPTURAL ARGUMENTS.

UNITARIAN Christians believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God and the Saviour of men. They believe in the divinity of his mission and in the divinity of his doctrines. They believe that the Gospel, which he proclaimed, came from God; that the knowledge it imparts, the morality it enjoins, the spirit it breathes, the acceptance it provides, the promises it makes, the prospects it exhibits, the rewards it proposes, the punishments it threatens, all proceed from the great Jehovah. But they do not believe, that Jesus Christ is the Supreme God. They believe that, though exalted far above all other created intelligences, he is a being distinct from, inferior to, and dependent upon, the Father Almighty. For this belief they urge, among other reasons, the following arguments from the Scriptures.

I. Because Jesus Christ is represented by the sacred writers to be as distinct a being from God the Father as one man is distinct from another. "It is written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. *I am one* who bear witness of myself, and *the Father* that sent me beareth witness of me," John viii, 17, 18.

II. Because he not only never said that himself was God, but, on the contrary, spoke of the *Father*, who sent him as God, and as the *only God*. "This is life eternal, that they might know *Thee, the only true God*, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent," John xvii, 3. This language our Saviour used in solemn prayer to "*his* Father and *our* Father."

III. Because he is declared in unnumbered instances, to be the *Son of God*. "And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, this is *my beloved Son*, in whom I am well pleased," Matth. iii, 17. Can a son be *coeval* and the *same* with his father?

IV. Because he is styled *the Christ*, or *the anointed of God*. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power," Acts x, 38. Is he who anoints the same with him who is anointed?

V. Because he is represented as a *Priest*. "Consider the * * * *high Priest* of our profession, Christ Jesus," Heb. iii, 1. The office of a priest is to *minister to God*. Christ, then, as a priest, cannot be God.

VI. Because Christ is *Mediator* between the "One God," and "men." "For there is one God, and one *Mediator between God and men*, the man Christ Jesus," 1 Tim. ii, 5.

VII. Because as *the Saviour* of men, he *was sent by the Father*. "And we have seen and do testify that *the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour* of the world," 1 John iv, 14.

VIII. Because he is an *apostle appointed by God*. "Consider the apostle, * * * Christ Jesus, who was faithful to *him that appointed* him," Heb. iii, 1, 2.

IX. Because Christ is represented as our *intercessor* with God. "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also *maketh intercession for us*," Rom. viii, 34.

X. Because the *head* of Christ is God. "I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and *the head of Christ is God*," 1 Cor. xi, 3.

XI. Because in the same sense, in which we are said to belong to Christ, *Christ* is said to *belong to God.* "And ye are Christ's and Christ is God's," 1 Cor. iii, 23.

XII. Because Christ says, "My Father is greater than all," John x, 29. Is not the father, then, greater than the son?

XIII. Because he affirms, in another connexion, and without the least qualification, "*My Father is greater than I*," John xiv, 28.

XIV. Because he virtually *denies that he is God*, when he exclaims, "why callest thou *me good?* There is none good but *one*, that is God," Matth. xix, 17.

XV. Because our Saviour, after having said, "I and my Father are one," gives his disciples distinctly to understand that he did not mean, *one in substance*, equal in power and glory, but *one* only in *affection* and *design*, &c. as clearly appears from the prayer he offers to his Father in their behalf,—"that *they all may be one;* as *thou*, Father, art *in me* and *I in thee*, that they also may be *one in us*," John xvii, 21.

XVI. Because the *Father* is called the God of *Christ*, as he is the God of *Christians.* "Jesus saith unto her,

* * * go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to *my God* and *your God*," John xx, 17.

XVII. Because an apostle says of GOD, in distinction from the "Lord Jesus Christ," that HE is the "*only* Potentate," and that HE "*only* hath immortality," 1 Tim. vi, 15, 16.

XVIII. Because it is the express declaration of the same apostle, that the *Father* is the *one God*, and there *is none other*. "Though there be that are called Gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) yet *to us there is but one God, the Father*, of whom are all things," 1 Cor. viii, 5, 6.

XIX. Because the power which Christ possessed was, as himself affirmed, *given* to him. "All power is *given* unto me," &c. Matth. xxviii, 18.

XX. Because he positively denies himself to be the author of his miraculous works, but refers them to the *Father*, or the holy spirit of God. "The *Father* that dwelleth in me, *he* doeth the works," John xiv, 10. "If I cast out devils *by the spirit of God*," &c, Matth. xii. 28.

XXI. Because he distinctly states, that these works bear witness, not to *his own power*, but that the *Futher had sent him*, John v, 36.

XXII. Because he expressly affirms, that the works were done not in his own, but in his *Father's name*, John x, 25.

XXIII. Because he asserts, that "him hath God the *Father sealed*," i. e. *to God the Father* he was indebted for his credentials, John vi, 27.

XXIV. Because he declares, that he is not the author of his own doctrine. "My doctrine is *not mine*, but his that sent me," John vii, 16, 17.

XXV. Because he represents himself as having been *instructed by the Father*. "*As my Father hath taught me*, I speak these things," John viii, 28.

XXVI. Because he refers *invariably* to the *Father* as the *origin* of the *authority* by which he spoke and acted, "The Father hath *given* to the Son authority," &c, John v, 26, 27.

XXVII. Because he acknowledges his dependence on his heavenly Father for example and direction in all his doings. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do," John v, 19. "The Father loveth the Son, and *sheweth* him all things, that himself doeth," John v, 20.

XXVIII. Because he says, "*I seek not mine own glory;* but *I honor my Father*," John viii, 49, 50.

XXIX. Because he declares, "if I honor *myself*, my honor is nothing; it is *my Father* that honoreth me," John viii, 54.

XXX. Because an apostle declares, that in Christ dwelt all fulness, *because it so pleased the Father*, Col. i, 19.

XXXI. Because Christ is uniformly represented in the Scriptures, not as the *primary*, but the *intermediate*, cause of all things relating to our salvation. "*One God, the Father, of whom* are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, *by whom* are all things, and we by *him*," 1 Cor. viii, 6.

XXXII. Because he declares, "I am not come of myself," into the world, "for I proceeded forth and came from God," John viii. 42, vii, 28. "Jesus knowing

* * * that he *came from God and went to God,*" &c, John xiii, 3.

XXXIII. Because he affirms, that he *had not the disposal* of the highest *places* in his own kingdom. " To sit on my right hand and on my left *is not mine to give*, but it shall be given to them for whom it is *prepared of my Father,*" Matth. xx, 23.

XXXIV. Because our Saviour, referring his disciples to a future time, when they would understand more accurately concerning him, expressly declares that *then* they would know him to be *entirely dependent* upon the Father. " When ye have lifted up the Son of man, [i. e. crucified him,] then shall ye know that I am he [i. e. the Messiah,] and that *I do nothing of myself*, but as my *Father hath taught me*, I speak these things," John viii, 28.

XXXV. Because our Saviour always professed to have *no will of his own*, but to be ever entirely *guided* and *governed* by the will of his heavenly Father. " For I came down from heaven, not to do *mine own will*, but the will of *him* that sent me," John vi, 38.

XXXVI. Because he expressly denies that he is possessed of the divine attribute of *independent existence.* " As the living Father hath sent me, and *I live by the Father,*" &c, John, vi, 57.

XXXVII. Because he expressly disclaims the possession of the divine attribute of *underived existence.* " As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he *given* to the Son to have life in himself," John v, 26.

XXXVIII. Because he positively denies, that he is possessed of the divine attribute of *omnipotence.* " I can of mine own self do nothing," John v, 30.

XXXIX. Because he expressly disclaims the possession of the divine attribute of *omniscience*. "But of that day, and that hour, *knoweth* no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither *the Son, but my Father only*," Math. xxiv. Mark xiii, 32.

XL. Because Christ is said in the Scriptures to have been "*tempted of the devil*," Matth. iv, 1. But "*God* cannot be tempted with evil."

XLI. Because it is related of our Saviour, that "he continued all night in *prayer* to God," Luke vi, 12. Why should Christ thus pray, if he himself were God?

XLII. Because, in presence of a numerous company before the resurrection of Lazarus, *he gave thanks to the Father for having heard him*. "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I knew that thou hearest me always," John xi, 41, 42.

XLIII. Because Jesus *besought his Father to glorify him*. "And now, O Father, *glorify thou me* with thyself, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," John xvii, 5. The being who prayed to God to glorify him, *cannot* be God.

XLIV. Because he *implored* that, if it were possible, the bitter cup might pass from him, adding, "nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt," Matth. xxvi, 39.

XLV. Because he said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matth. xxvii, 46. *Can* he who uttered this be the supreme God?

XLVI. Because he never paid his adorations to *himself, the Son*, nor to the *Holy Ghost*, as he should have done, had the Son and the Holy Ghost been *God;* but *always to the Father.*

XLVII. Because he never instructed his disciples to worship *himself* or the *Holy Ghost*, but the *Father*, and the Father *only*. "When ye pray, say, our *Father* which art in heaven," Luke xi, 2. "In that day, *ye shall ask me nothing*. Whatsoever ye ask of the *Father* in my name," &c, John xvi, 23. "The hour cometh and now is, when the *true worshippers shall worship the Father* in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh *such* to worship *him*," John iv, 23.

XLVIII. Because it was not the practice of the apostles to pay religious homage to Christ, but to *God* the Father *through* Christ. "I thank God *through* Jesus Christ," Rom. vii, 25. "To God *only* wise, be glory *through* Christ," Rom. xvi, 27. I bow my knees unto the *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ," Eph. iii, 14.

XLIX. Because St Peter, immediately after being filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, thus addressed the Jews; "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man *approved of God* among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs which *God did by him*, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; *whom God hath raised up*," &c, Acts ii, 22—24.

L. Because St Paul expressly states, that "*all things are of God*, who hath reconciled us to himself *by* Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. v, 18.

LI. Because the same apostle gives "thanks *to God*, who giveth us the victory *through* our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. xv, 57.

LII. Because it is said, that it is "*to the glory of God the Father*," that "every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord," Phil. ii. 11.

LIII. Because the Scriptures affirm, that "Christ *glorified not himself* to be made a high priest, but He [glorified him] who said unto him, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," Heb. v, 5.

LIV. Because it is expressly asserted, that *God gave to Christ* the Revelation which was made to the author of the Apocalypse, Rev. i, 1.

LV. Because an apostle speaks of Christ, *only as the image* of God. "Who is the image of the invisible God," Col. i, 15. 2 Cor. iv, 4. It would be absurd to call any one *his own image*.

LVI. Because Christ is stated to be "the *first-born* of every *creature*," Col. i, 15.

LVII. Because he is said to be "the beginning of the *creation* of God," Rev. iii, 14.

LVIII. Because the Scriptures affirm, in so many words, that "Jesus was made a little *lower* than the angels," Heb. ii, 9. Can God become lower than his creatures?

LIX. Because Peter declares that, "*Christ received from God the Father honor and glory*, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, this is my beloved son," &c, 2 Peter i, 17.

LX. Because it is represented as necessary that the Saviour of mankind should "*be made like unto his brethren*," Heb. ii, 17.

LXI. Because, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Christ is *compared with Moses* in a manner that would be impious, if he were the Supreme God. "For this man

[Christ] was counted worthy of more glory than Moses inasmuch," &c, Heb. iii, 3.

LXII. Because he is represented as being the *servant*, the *chosen*, the *beloved* of God, and the *recipient of God's spirit*. "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen, in whom my soul is well pleased; I will put my spirit upon him," &c, Matth. xii, 18.

LXIII. Because he himself expressly declares that, it was in consequence of *his doing what pleased the Father*, that the Father was *with him and did not leave him alone*. "He that *sent* me is *with me;* the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him," John viii, 29.

LXIV. Because he is said to have "*increased* in wisdom, and in favor with *God* and man," Luke ii, 52.

LXV. Because he speaks of himself as one who had *received commands* from the Father. "The Father, who sent me, he *gave me* a commandment," John xii, 49.

LXVI. Because he is represented as *obeying* the Father, and as having been "obedient unto death," Phil. ii, 8. Even as the Father said unto me, so I speak, John xii, 50. "I have kept my Father's commandments," John xv, 10.

LXVII. Because Christ "*learned obedience* by the things which he *suffered*," and *through sufferings was made perfect by God*, Heb. v, 8; ii, 10.

LXVIII. Because he is spoken of in the Scriptures as the *first-born among many brethren*. Rom. viii, 29. Has God *brethren?*

LXIX. Because Christ calls every one, who obeys God, his *brother*. "Whosover shall do the will of *my Father* in heaven, the same is *my brother*," Matth. xii, 50.

LXX. Because he offers to the faithful the like distinction and honor that himself has with the Father. "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sit down with my Father in his throne," Rev. iii, 21.

LXXI. Because *God*, in the latter ages, hath spoken *by his Son*, and *appointed him* heir of all things, Heb. i, 2.

LXXII. Because Christ is styled *the first begotten of the dead*, Rev. i, 5.

LXXIII. Because it is declared that *God raised him from the dead*. "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses," Acts ii, 32.

LXXIV. Because God poured out upon the Apostles the Holy Spirit, *through Jesus Christ*, Tit. iii, 6.

LXXV. Because the reason assigned for the Holy Spirit not having been received earlier, is, that *Jesus was not then glorified*. "The Holy Ghost was not yet given because that Jesus was not yet glorified," John vii, 39.

LXXVI. Because it is affirmed that Christ was *exalted by God* to be a prince and a Saviour, Acts v, 31.

LXXVII. Because God *made* that same Jesus, who was crucified, both Lord and Christ, Acts ii, 36.

LXXVIII. Because God *gave him* a name which is above every name, Phil. ii, 9.

LXXIX. Because Christ was *ordained of* God to be the judge of quick and dead, Acts x, 42.

LXXX. Because God will judge the secrets of men *by* Jesus Christ, Rom. iii, 16.

LXXXI. Because all judgment *is committed* to Christ *by the Father*, John v, 22.

LXXXII. Because our Saviour grounds the impor-

tance of his judgment solely upon the circumstances, that it is *not* exclusively *his own* judgment, which he pronounces, but that of the Father who sent him. "If I judge, my judgment is true; *for I am not alone*, but *I and the Father* that sent me," John viii, 16.

LXXXIII. Because it is said, that when he was received up into heaven, he "*sat on the right hand of God*," Mark xvi, 19.

LXXXIV. Because St Paul affirms, that Christ, even since his ascension, "liveth *unto* God," and "liveth *by* the power of God," Rom. vi, 10. 2 Cor. xiii, 4.

LXXXV. Because it is affirmed of Christ, that "when all things shall be subdued under him, then shall the *Son also himself be subject* unto him that put all things under him, that *God may be all in all*," 1 Cor. xv, 28.

LXXXVI. Because the Apostle John asserts that "*no man hath seen God* at any time;" which is not true. if Christ were God.

LXXXVII. Because in the *prophecies* of the O. T. that relate to Christ, he is spoken of as a being distinct from and inferior to God, Deut. xviii, 15. John i, 45.

LXXXVIII. Because the Jews never expected, that any other than a being distinct from and inferior to God, was to be their Messiah, and yet there is no evidence that our Saviour ever so much as hinted to them that this expectation was erroneous.

LXXXIX. Because it does not appear from the Scriptures, that the Jews, except in two instances, ever opposed our Saviour on the ground that he pretended to *be God or equal with God;* whereas, had it been his custom to assume such identity or equality, in his conversation with a people so strongly attached to the doctrine of the *divine unity*, he would have found him-

self involved in a perpetual controversy with them on this point, some traces of which must have appeared in the New Testament.

XC. Because *in these two instances*, when charged, in the one case, with making himself God, and in the other, with making himself equal with God, he *positively denies the charges*. In reply to the charge of assuming to be *equal with God*, he says immediately, "The Son can do *nothing* of himself, but what he seeth the Father do;" and directly after, "I can of mine own self do nothing," John v, 19, 30. In answer to the charge of *making himself God*, he appeals to the Jews, in substance thus; Your own Scriptures call Moses a god, and your magistrates gods; I am surely not inferior to them, yet I did not call myself *God* but only *Son* of God, John x, 34, 35, 36.

XCI. Because, had his immediate disciples believed him to be the Almighty, would they have been so *familiar* with him, have *argued* with him, *betrayed* him, *denied* him, *fled from* him, and *left him to be dragged to the cross?*

XCII. Because the Apostles, after they had been filled with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, did not preach that Christ was God; but preached what was altogether inconsistent with such a doctrine; Acts ii, 22; xiii, 23; xvii, 3, 31; xxii, 8.

XCIII. Because there is no evidence to prove that the first converts so Christianity ever incurred the imputation of *idolatry* from the Jews, as they must have done, had they believed and taught that the *Son*, as well as the *Father*, is Jehovah; while it is notorious that this imputation has been among the most common of the Jewish

reproaches against Christians, since the Trinity became a doctrine of the church.

XCIV. Because there are, in the N. T. *seventeen* passages, wherein the *Father* is styled *one* or *only God*, while there is not a single passage in which the *Son* is so styled.

XCV. Because there are 320 passages, in which the *Father* is absolutely, and by way of *eminence*, called God; while there is *not one* in which the *Son* is thus called.

XCVI. Because there are 105 passages, in which the *Father* it denominated God, with *peculiarly high titles and epithets*, whereas the *Son* is not once so denominated.

XCVII. Because there are 90 passages, wherein it is declared that *all prayers* and *praises* ought to be offered to HIM and that everything ought to be ultimately directed to HIS *honor and glory*; while of the *Son* no such declaration is ever made.

XCVIII. Because, of 1300 passages in the N. T. wherein the word *God* is mentioned, not one necessarily implies the existence of more than *one person* in the Godhead, or that this one is any other than the *Father*.

XCIX. Because the passages wherein the *Son* is declared, *positively*, or by clearest implication, to be *subordinate to the father, deriving his being from Him, receiving from Him his divine power, and acting in all things wholly according to His will*, are in number above 300.

C. Because in a word, the supremacy of the Father, and the inferiority of the Son, is the *simple*, *unembarrassed*, and *current* doctrine of the Bible; whereas, that of their *equality* or *identity* is clothed in mystery, encumbered with difficulties, and dependent, at the best, upon few passages for support.

1st Series. No. 3.

ON

HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

By EDMUND Q. SEWALL.

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DISCOURSE.

Ecclesiastes vii. 29.—Lo! this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

It is obvious that the term 'man' occurs here in its generic sense, denoting the race collectively. The word rendered 'upright' may with more precision be translated 'right.' It implies no qualities positively virtuous, but simply the absence of all obliquity. And the whole passage conveys this important sentiment, *God hath made man right;* with a proper nature, possessing such powers as are requisite in the place he fills, and for all the designs of his being. When we begin to live there is nothing in our moral frame which is itself wrong, or must necessarily produce sin. Whatever be the amount of wickedness in the characters of men, it is not the proper fruit of the human nature, but results entirely from a voluntary abuse and perversion of that nature.

This doctrine is opposed to some opinions commonly inculcated on the subject of man's condition; but not opposed to Scripture; not opposed to facts, as they lie around us in society; not opposed to conscience and to reason. From each of these sources are drawn the ar-

guments we employ for its support. The discussion I propose on this occasion will bear chiefly on the point of *native hereditary depravity*, which gives us a false account of the cause of that moral evil which is seen and felt in the world. But before I enter on this main design, let me suggest a few remarks on another branch of the general subject; I mean, *total depravity*, which gives us as false a view of the *degree* of sin found among men, as the other does of its *origin*. The two dogmas are inseparable in the popular notions of human character, and both have a bad tendency so far as they operate without modification from other principles.

If the word 'total' have any meaning in the phrase 'total depravity,' it excludes every good feeling, desire, purpose, and action, and makes the character of mankind consist solely of bad dispositions, passions, and deeds. To be totally depraved is to be evil in every part, and evil always. Where now is the being on the face of the earth, who has done nothing but sin; whose every act has been wicked, and all his thoughts, emotions, and desires, corrupt? Where is the man, concerning whom it is *true*, that since he was born he has had in his mind nothing pure, and in his conduct nothing right? You cannot find such a being; this may be the description of a devil, but not of a man. We may imagine such a sinner, but we never saw one. We are greatly deceived by the popular theological division of our race into two classes, between which is drawn a line straight and inflexible, as between two distinct orders of beings having no alliance, and unable to pass from one to the other. That division is a mere fiction. That line is nowhere apparent among the real characters which we meet and mingle with on the

stage of life. The world contains no such beings as the saints and sinners described in many sermons and painted in many tracts and magazines. They are as unlike the actual men and women around us, as if the one were described as having no senses, and the other as having no souls.

But of what use is any description of mankind which wants a counterpart in nature and life? It cannot be true—for a glance at the world as it is, belies it. Look abroad for yourselves, brethren, and tell me if you can discover among the good, one who has ceased to be frail, and incapable of becoming evil. Take the accounts which men give you of themselves—take their own judgments of their own characters—will you conclude that any are totally holy? But is it fair to pronounce all who may be sinners, *totally depraved*, when you dare not pronounce all who are saints, *totally pure?* There is as much evidence of a partial depravity in the one case, as of a partial holiness in the other. There are as many proofs of a little remaining good in those who pass for wicked men, as of some remaining corruption in those reputed pious men. It is as correct to esteem the latter entirely holy, as to esteem the former entirely depraved. The fact is, there are no unmixed characters among men. The best are not perfect in virtue, the worst may still be capable of a recovery from vice. There are degrees of goodness, and degrees of sin; the former ascending from a very low, to almost angelic virtue, the latter descending from simple failing to the deepest guilt. However to my narrow view it may seem that no vestige of what is good remains in some of my fellow-beings, or even that their

capacity of goodness is extinct, yet there is an eye which discerns more clearly, and may discover symptoms of reviving health, where all to me wears the aspect of death. I dare not, I never will say, that there slumbers not beneath the ruins, on which I gaze with despair, a spark of virtue, which shall be kindled yet into a celestial flame. I leave an abandoned sinner, hopeless of restoring him myself, but remembering that what is impossible with man is possible with God. And as to the doctrine that we are all totally depraved, I must consider it as I should a proposition which declared that all men were fools, all men were giants, or all men were monsters. We are not *totally* anything whatever, for be the quality what it may, there are ten thousand chances that we have a little of its opposite too. Some are wise; but not always, nor in all things. Some are timorous generally; yet on an occasion can be bold as lions. Some are indolent generally; yet, for some desired end, will rouse themselves to the most vigorous activity. Where nothing is fixed and permanent, but all in progress, pressing onward, it is rash to attempt nice definitions and descriptions, for the object may change under your hand. So it is, to affix such characteristics as denote completeness in good or evil, to mutable men. The only just and true account of human character is that which represents it as mixed and imperfect in all its forms.

The Scriptures are often quoted to prove the total depravity of mankind. But there are two very obvious principles of interpretation, which ought to be applied to the passages thus employed, and which remove at once

all pretence for using them in evidence of such a doctrine.

1. What is declared in universal terms is not always to be received without limitation. We often affirm absolutely, and in the most unqualified language, what we know to be true, only for the most part and with some exceptions. All books contain more or less examples of such propositions as the author designs his readers should understand, not to the full extent of their literal import, but as general truths. When God was about to destroy a guilty generation by the deluge, it is recorded, 'And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its way.' 'All flesh' is a universal term, including every man alive. But there was, at least, one exception; for 'Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.' Paul, in his address to the Lystrians, says, that 'God had, in times past, suffered *all* nations to walk in their own ways.' But he had not so suffered the Jews, who had enjoyed a revelation and been subjected to peculiar restraints. John tells the early converts, 'Ye know all things.' We are compelled by the very nature of the case to put a limitation on the word 'all,' which reduces the meaning of the passage to the bare affirmation, that they knew whatever they needed as Christians to know. The proposition, as it stands, ascribes omniscience to them.

In like manner, although some passages of Scripture, which speak of the degeneracy of mankind, at certain periods, are so expressed, that we might suppose not an individual remained, who had the least goodness in him, we learn from sacred history, that there was always a

remnant of righteous men in periods the most degenerate. The first chapter of Romans describes the character of the nations in the darkest colors, and of Gentiles and Jews affirms, 'they are all under sin.' But corrupt as were the great body of the Jews when Messiah came, we are made acquainted in the Gospels and Acts with many excellent characters. Of Simeon we read, 'He was a just and devout man.' Nathaniel was 'an Israelite indeed, without guile.' Anna 'served God with alms and prayers.' The Baptist's parents 'were righteous before God, and walked in his ordinances blameless.' Among the Gentiles, the Roman Centurion and Cornelius, with 'devout Greeks not a few,' are worthy examples, and vindicate us in the assertion, that there was, doubtless, a large portion of society, who had not shared that depravity which Paul so vividly describes. Indeed, if you will go over the catalogue of crimes of which he accused the heathen, you will see that it is utterly impossible for such wickedness to have been universal. He himself allows us to make an extensive exception, for he speaks of Gentiles 'who did by nature the things contained in the law.' From Psalm liii. Paul quotes a passage, and accommodates it to his own description. That passage applies to men at a particular period, and not to the race. It is misunderstood for want of a little fairness and attention; 'Every one of them is gone back—they have altogether become filthy—there is none that doeth good, no, not one.' The persons here intended were then living or had lived previously. There is nothing which justifies us in including all the human beings who shall ever live. Besides, not even all that genera-

tion is comprehended; for it is added immediately after these words; 'have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people?' It seems, then, there were some who were good enough to be called God's people, in opposition to the workers of iniquity, notwithstanding it was affirmed that not one of the children of men did good, no, not one. If we persist in giving an absolute acceptance to all general propositions, we shall get into difficulties from which nothing can relieve us. There is obviously no justice in our interpreting passages which speak in the strong language of eastern hyperbole of the corruption of men, as if they were strict philosophical statements. We must take these passages as they were meant to be taken, as vivid representations of a fact, not exact definitions of a doctrine.

2. The second rule to be applied to those parts of Scripture, which relate to the moral condition of particular persons, communities, or generations, is this; All which was true of them, may not be true of us;—we have been educated with all the benefits of Christian light, and under the influence of Christian institutions. It would be false, and no credit to the Gospel, to say that a very great difference is not perceptible between Christian countries and others,—a difference, which affects the whole population of such countries, and not merely the body of professed believers. Now to take phrases, employed to represent the moral character of ancient heathens, and apply them with no modification to all people of all ages and climes, Christian as well as Pagan, is unjust to the last degree, if not palpably absurd. Just so far as we resemble the characters de-

picted in Scripture, the language used respecting them will convey a fair account of us, and no further.

It is truly astonishing that people do not see this, and that so many feel obliged to take to themselves a description of guilt of which they are not conscious, because the description is in the Bible. What a stumbling block does it throw in the way of simple minds, thus to bind them down to acknowledge, as their own, a character, the original of which lived some thousand years ago! No less than this is done by those who make the account in the first chapters of Romans, a description of the human race, or who, from such passages, infer the doctrine that all men are entirely depraved. Those portions of Scripture, which like this, describe in glowing language the prevalent corruptions of present or past times, are not to be made the basis of any doctrine respecting human nature itself, or the human character universally, and in all periods; we must interpret them accordingly; the nature of the case requires and justifies it. When we have collected into one horrid group, all the sick, maimed, blind, deaf, decrepid, who crowd the hospitals or streets of a great city, we have, surely, not gained materials for a description of its inhabitants. A traveller, passing through a fine fertile country, would be deemed mad, if he filled his journal with accounts of the barren spots which were scattered here and there in his way, or gave us a grave narrative of the beggars, thieves, and knaves, whom it was his fortune to encounter, as an index to the morals of the people. A historian who should collect a long catalogue of bad princes; with descriptions of public calamities, and political mistakes, not

noticing at all the blessings which followed from the government of good princes, or the numerous prosperous events of their several reigns, would hardly be respected as authority. But the history of mankind, their moral history, demands no less fidelity than this ; and we ought not to take it from those who have studied men only in their vices.

But regard the general character of the race as bad as you may, it is not a beneficial habit to dwell chiefly on what is evil in it. The individual who does so, injures himself, and society shares the injury. Whence has proceeded that chilling skepticism which confounds all moral distinctions, laughs at virtue and vice as mere names, and at the goodness apparent in society, as the silly efforts of fools to cheat each other ? In many cases, I believe, from this very practice of which I now complain. Begin by allowing yourself to put the worst coloring on human actions, habitually to see things in their evil aspects, and to ascribe what seems good to doubtful motives, you may soon come to make no important difference in your opinion, between the best men and the worst ; and you may end, at last, by disowning all moral distinctions, that you may sneer alike at all mankind.—It is worthy of remark, that the most notorious skeptics, the bitterest enemies to Christianity, are the very men who have labored most zealously in the base work of degrading the species. In their writings, every good affection is derided ; every pretence to virtue mocked ; and the noblest actions and sentiments, resolved into some vile principle. No such lessons on depravity as they teach ; none so thorough, and none so

appalling. But they are consistent; having reduced man to a level with the brutes, they give him brutal pleasures as his proper good, and a brute's death as his proper end.

Besides the danger of causing skepticism, there are others in the habit of magnifying what is bad in human character, which ought to put us equally on our guard. These may be made apparent to any one who has observed the tendency of excessive feelings, to disease the mind in all its powers. It cannot be denied that very serious mischief is occasioned by allowing the sense of shame and remorse to be too strongly and too long operative in cases where there is a natural proneness to despondence. But there are no instances where a habit of self-disparagement will not, at length, produce evils nearly, or quite, as great. And these are sometimes fatal to the character, where they are not to the present enjoyment of the individual. Let the constant feeling in a man's mind, respecting himself, be such as degrades him in his own eyes, and you will discover in him that moral apathy which refuses all exertion, under the plea that it is useless; and which has ceased, at once, to hope and to desire improvement, from an idea that it is not possible. To strive after moral excellence, one must retain the consciousness that he is capable of it; when that is gone, all is lost. Now the morbid habit of exaggerating one's own sins, takes away this feeling; and a similar effect, in a wider extent, may be produced, by unduly magnifying what is faulty in the character of mankind generally. Confine a young man of warm heart, with all that confidence in the professions of oth-

ers, usual at his age, to the society of persons, professedly religious, but from whom he shall daily hear the language of self-abuse, mingled with unsparing censures of their neighbors, — who shall question sarcastically the soundness of every apparent virtue, and color every fault in the deepest dye, — who, in fine, shall habitually inveigh against human depravity, and set mankind before him in their worst possible lights, — and what may you expect? If he rely on their statements, or from ignorance be unable to refute them, how must they affect his mind? Will they not inspire him with unwonted jealousy, not only of his own emotions, but of the motives of others? Will they not supplant his generous confidence by base suspicion; his disposition to admire, esteem, and love, by the malignant feelings of abhorrence and resentment; his desire of excellence, by doubts of the reality of all virtue?

However it may seem to us now, we may be assured that the habit of looking only at the bad qualities of men, has a tendency like a constant association with wicked people. As he who should dwell in the midst of assassins, knaves, and sharpers, would insensibly acquire a temper, quite averse to the friendly sympathies, so will the man whose mind seeks the dark images of guilt for its common company. He will have their hues reflected on himself. His respect for others will necessarily be impaired by contemplating them most often in the light of depraved beings, adversaries to God and goodness. His self-respect can hardly be retained with the belief that he is no better than they. And it would not be surprising if his permanent disposition should settle into

something resembling the moral apathy, which we have before traced from a kindred cause.

I have said that society shares the evils of too exclusive a regard to what is bad in human character; and it is easily shown. If the doctrine of depravity produced its full, natural effects, we should be, indeed, 'hateful, and hating one another;' social intercourse would be more like the herding of animals of prey, than the associating of Christians. And even its most modified influence has some such consequences as this supposes. Two men, who look upon each other as totally corrupt, cannot feel mutual confidence or affection; and the pious people, who, with still stronger emotions, must approach those, whom they believe the enemies of all they ought to love most, will not cherish a sentiment kinder than pity, even if they do not allow themselves in abhorrence towards them. If a temporary check of benevolent affections will weaken them; how can brotherly love exist, with much strength, in the heart which is daily filled with new bitterness, by the faith, that nearly all, who might be the objects of its sympathy, are thoroughly wicked, and so, unworthy of affection?

An attentive observer, will, perhaps, see cause to trace that spirit of exclusion, which erects its high walls in the vineyard of Christ, and repels, with such cruelty, the hand offered from without, and answers the voice of charity with the rebuke of bigotry, to this origin. To shut out from your fellowship those, who are believed to be excluded from God's mercy, is not strange; to hate a being who is utterly odious, is no more so. And thus, in learning the lesson of total depravity, we learn how to indulge our bad feelings with a good excuse.

Better, then, — yes, infinitely better, is it for us all, to turn away our eyes from the spectacle of guilt, and gaze intently on the lovelier picture of virtue ; better forget as much, and as fast as we can, the vices of others, however we may preserve the memory of our own ; better hold up for our imitation the illustrious good, than study, amid the shades, the totally depraved. In other words, if we must confine ourselves to either extreme, in our contemplation of human character, let us choose the *best* and not the *worst*. By too fair an estimate of men, we may lose something, perhaps, but it will not be our generous affections, our love of excellence, our admiration for virtue, and the purpose to emulate what we admire. By dwelling on man's corruptions only, whatever we may gain, it will not be a kinder, nor a purer heart. Who would prefer to have the image of a Judas continually present to his thoughts, rather than commune at the lonely hour, with the benignant Jesus ?

I return now, to that part of the common doctrine of Depravity, which concerns its origin. In this it is maintained that men are *born* sinners. The vices apparent in mature life, are traced back to a corrupt nature, and represented as its proper and necessary fruits. Now, to such an opinion, we cannot assent, for many strong reasons.

I. In the first place, *it implies an impossibility.* Sin has been defined 'the transgression of the law.' That law cannot have been transgressed which is not known, together with the obligations of obedience, and consequences of disobedience. But we come into life, in total, blank ignorance, not possessing the knowledge of a sin-

gle substance in nature, much less of the principles of moral duty. How can we be sinners by birth, when we are not then conscious even of the power to sin? Who can look upon a sleeping *infant* and say, there slumbers an *enemy* of God; when, upon that helpless creature's mind, not even the image of the mother that fosters it, has, as yet, been impressed, and it has felt no *love*, far less *hatred*? We shrink instinctively from charging guilt on a being so evidently innocent; but this is only shrinking from truth, if men are born sinners; for then, every infant of a day old is as truly depraved, as the criminal of half a century. Should this seem inadmissible, reject the doctrine that implies it.

But our opponents urge against all this, that the corruption of human nature, if not discoverable in an infant, will certainly be developed as soon as he becomes capable of moral action at all — and is fairly inferred from the earliest intelligent conduct. On what does this inference rest? From what may we so confidently draw a conclusion of such extent and importance? Does it fairly spring from the indications of character after the age of infancy? I ask, then, whether we ought to draw our conclusions from one side of the case, without looking at the other; and if it be not unjust to infer more from the indications of what is *bad* in childhood, than from the indications of what is *good*? Let any man produce an instance of a human being, at that period, who has manifested *no other* disposition or propensity than such as are evil; it is impossible. Our blessed Saviour said, concerning children, 'of such is the kingdom of heaven;' 'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom'

The apostle says, 'in malice be ye children.' And what eye, but one jaundiced with the darkest prejudice, can have failed to discover, in the conduct of youth, abundant evidences of purity of heart? If bad tempers sometimes appear, yet, let us not make too much of them, or because of them, underrate the more numerous proofs of better qualities. I do not hesitate to put it to any man's conscience to declare, whether he has not seen as much that was attractive and amiable, as of the contrary in children; whether, in all their artless conversation, their joyous sports, their ardent attachments, their open, unsuspicious conduct in the presence of their elders, their sense of shame, when reproved, and their readiness to forgive the faults of others, he can discover nothing but the malignity of a heart entirely corrupt? I maintain there is, at least, *equal* reason to infer the absolute purity and innocence of human nature, from the indications of disposition in childhood, as to presume the opposite. And since it will not be denied that the least sinful portion of every community is its youth; since the nearer you approach the fountain, the purer are the streams; I know not but we are warranted in believing that the fountain itself is unpolluted.

If the sinful actions of men at *any* period of life are proof of a nature originally corrupt, what are we to affirm of Adam's sin? Our opponents are wont to extol him as not only sinless, but positively righteous; he transgressed, however. And his offence just as strongly proves that his nature was originally tainted, as our offences prove the depravity of our nature. And if they are compelled to own, that in him there was no sin when

created, why do they not believe that in us there was no sin when born? God is our creator as he was Adam's, — our nature is the same as our progenitor's, — we sin, — he sinned; we have a corrupt nature, — his nature was uncorrupt. How does this hold together? If *our* having sinned, proves us to have been *born* sinful, *his* having sinned, proves him to have been *made* sinful. The premises are equally broad in both cases; and the same conclusion must be drawn.

If we recur to the passage in Genesis, which is often quoted on this subject, we find it there recorded, that God created men 'in his own image.' Now, whatever that image be, I affirm it was not impressed on Adam only, but is also ascribed to his posterity. The Apostle James, speaking of the vices of the tongue, says, 'Therewith bless we God, and therewith curse we men which are made after the similitude of God.' If, then, this similitude was, in the case of Adam, not *destroyed* by his offence, shall we infer from our sins, that we never *possessed* it, in express contradiction of Scripture?

Again, it may be inquired with propriety, what evidence we have, respecting those deemed by our opponents regenerate, that their nature is not the *same* which they had before they 'were born again?' this ought to be proved, before we infer from the doctrine of Regeneration that men are born totally depraved. The Scriptures do not assert or imply, in all they contain on this subject, that 'a new nature' is received, but only that a new character is acquired. Putting off the old man with his deeds, turning from the error of the wicked, to the obedience of the just, being redeemed from a vain con-

versation, neither of them intends parting with human nature itself. Nor is it an uncommon thing to hear those who are reputed to be 'new creatures' complaining of their remaining corruption; a circumstance which does not seem to indicate, that in conversion they gained a *new nature*.

If, indeed, we inquire what it is, in the most remarkable instances of a moral renovation, which constitutes the difference between their present and their former state, it would be discovered that the *better use* and *direction* of the powers and affections they had *always possessed*, was the principal distinction. The same appetites, desires, passions, which *once* disturbed the mind, would *still* do so, if the control of conscience were to be removed, and the habits of virtue broken. To pass from a high place in the religious esteem of his brethren, to a very low one, might require less of every supposed convert, than he or they imagine. This would be seen more clearly, if it were not that a man who 'falls away' is immediately reported a hypocrite; although his sincerity was probably less deservedly questioned than his share in our common nature was palpably manifested.

Regeneration is called by such as believe the doctrine of native depravity, a work of special grace; God only can accomplish it; and it is *finished*, at once, wherever he undertakes. But the fact that, after all, there should be so much left of what regeneration is supposed to remove, native depravity, gives the affair a nearer resemblance to human, than divine, transactions. And it shows, that nothing can be justly argued respecting the character of our nature, from the testimony of those who think *their own* has been changed.

II. It has been pretended, by some advocates of the doctrine of hereditary depravity, that it implies no more than that men are 'destitute of *holiness* at birth.' If this signify that we have no positively virtuous qualities, then, none deny it. But we believe there are *no sinful* qualities either; and by the same kind of reasoning which satisfies them, without going a step further, we may arrive at our own conclusion. It is said for instance, on their part, sin cannot proceed from a *holy* nature! We add, with as much propriety, neither can virtue proceed from an unholy nature. The fact is as clear that men do good, as that they do evil; and one kind of moral action proves as much in regard to the quality of our nature, as the other, so far as it goes.

But, in truth, the doctrine I now oppose, does comprehend more than a simple destitution of holiness; and we are taught in it, that men are naturally indisposed to all good, and inclined to all evil, having no power to obey the will of God. To this doctrine we object, secondly, because *it is contrary to the Analogy of the rest of God's works.* Every other creature of God, so far as our knowledge extends, is formed with a nature exactly adapted to the place it fills, and the purposes of its being. We can discover no exception; where we are acquainted with the kind of life and action any particular class of animals were designed for, we perceive every part of their frame nicely fitted to its proper use. In our own bodies, how admirably are the various organs prepared for the purposes intended in their formation. For what end, then, did God make man? What is the ultimate design of our being? Is not virtue, religion, holi-

ness allowed to be the principal thing? Was it not with a view to these objects that our moral nature was conferred? Is it possible, then, that God, who has created all other animals with just such a nature as they require, and who has so wonderfully adjusted our own corporeal frame, that not a muscle or fibre — not the minutest part is out of place, or incapable of its proper action, has yet sent us into life, with our *souls* in such a state, that we are *utterly incapable* of the very purpose for which alone we *have* souls? How are we to explain this departure of infinite wisdom from its ordinary course? Is man the only being, concerning whom, it is of no importance that his faculties should be fitted for their service? Is he, who is but a little lower than the angels, made with less care and kindness, than the sparrow that falleth to the ground?

But, rejoins an opponent, the first human being acted for his posterity, and they partake his guilt. Thus says the Westminster Catechism, 'the Covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself but his posterity, all mankind sinned in him. The sinfulness of that state, into which man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature. All mankind by the fall, lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to the miseries of this life, to death, and the pains of hell forever.' Where in the Bible, I ask, do you find such language as this? Where are we told that the covenant with Adam was made for his posterity likewise? The Bible says only, 'in the day *thou* eatest, *thou* shalt die.' There is not even an allusion to his posterity.

And how can we have sinned sixty centuries before we began to live? How can we be guilty of that which, but for history, we never should have known? Does not guilt imply the consciousness of having sinned? What penitent was ever smitten with remorse for Adam's sin? This is a most absurd theory indeed; but its absurdity is not its worst feature.

Suppose a human tribunal should arraign a young man as a capital offender, because of a murder committed by one of his remotest ancestors, and condemn him to die; would society suffer such a judgment? And is the nature of the transaction altered by carrying it up to the Court of Heaven? Is it any the less unjust for uncounted millions to be laid 'under the wrath and curse of God' forever, in consequence of a single offence of a man who lived ages before they were born, than for one to be put to death for his immediate progenitor's crime? Where shall we find a name for that Covenant, which barters the salvation of a world of beings not yet existing, and suspends their eternal weal or woupon the first act of a frail creature, who, it is foreseen, will fall? We know no Covenants, made by one man for another, without his consent; and will the infinitely good God own such a contract as this? No. If there is anything certain in religion, it is that God cannot be the author of that which would be criminal in his creatures. The Bible is silent about this Covenant. No page of it records the fatal instrument.

III. Another argument against the doctrine of native depravity, is, that *it destroys the foundation of human Accountability.*

When we see a man who has been blind from his birth, do we regard the consequences of that defect as subject of blame ? Would it not be alike foolish and cruel to upbraid him for his ignorance of letters, or stumbling in his walk ? When we see a man who was born an idiot, witness his wild and melancholy movements, or hear that shriek which fills the heart with anguish, do we not lament this absence of intellect as a misfortune ? Suppose by some strange occurrence he were to cause the death of another, would he be guilty of murder ? What then, if instead of a deficiency of reason, he were born with some *moral* defect, which hinders his *doing* right, as the other would hinder his *judging* right ; is he any more to blame for the consequences ? I think not. An idiot's wild behaviour is ascribed to his *mental* unsoundness. A sinner's vices proceed from his *moral* unsoundness. But be it mental or moral, if we were *born* thus unsound, no power save the Creator's could have prevented the defect ; and if the sinner is, notwithstanding, blameworthy, so is the idiot. A child of parents whose frame is diseased may inherit that disease, yet who dares accuse the child ? And by what right are we accused if we inherit diseased souls, while, we are not to blame for inheriting diseased bodies ?

The whole affair of deriving moral qualities from our parents by birth, has absurdity on its front. We might as well talk of inheriting *learning* from an *erudite* father as *sin* from a *corrupt* father. To make a proper moral agent there must be all the power of whatever kind that is requisite for the performance of duty. If we have a part of this power, but not the whole, we are not moral

agents. For the insane man has a part, and yet while insane is not accountable. If by nature we have a capacity to discriminate between good and evil, to understand moral rules, and feel our obligations, and yet have no power to fulfil them, we then have only a part of what moral agents must have in order to their being accountable for their actions; and so by nature we are not responsible. You may say all of native depravity which you can say of insanity here; both are accidents, brought on men by the providence of God, without their own agency. The accident of being born is surely not less beyond our control than a blow on the head, or a brain fever. And if to the former we owe our bad hearts, are we not as excusable as if we could trace them to the latter? Ascribe sin to anything out of ourselves, and which we can neither escape nor remedy, you have then destroyed our accountability. Our birth is just such a circumstance, and by tracing iniquity to nativity, you make us no more to blame for the one than the other, — no more answerable for sinning than for having been born.

An evasion is often resorted to, which attempts to shun this dilemma by resolving all sin into a fault of the will. Men have *power* to do right, but they *will* not. Was this bad *will* equally bad when we first exercised the power of volition? Was our will perverse when we came into life? Did the cause why we do not will to obey God, exist at our birth and in our souls, as they were then? If so, the same conclusion follows. We are not accountable. If not, native depravity vanishes. Define that depravity as you please; call it our inability to

do our duty by any name you choose ; I only ask if we were *born* with it? That is the great and only point in question. And be it a disjointed limb, or idiocy, or a moral taint or anything else, if the cause of sin be native, we are not responsible, since we could not help it. But all human experience proves that we *are* accountable. All men feel guilty when they sin, and are conscious they have done not only what they *ought* not, but what they *need* not have done. Conscience blames *us* for our sins, not nature. Every reproof it utters is an argument against native depravity. We never learn from that the apology of inability, — conscience knows no inability to do what God commands to be done. It upbraids us for every fault as the consequence of our own folly; for every crime as the result of our own self-indulgence, and voluntary desertion of the right way. The doctrine of native sinfulness cannot be reconciled to its dictates ; the one affirms what the other denies ; the one makes us feel *worthy* of punishment, the other makes all punishment unjust, because it must be inflicted for what we could not help. Conscience traces back the sins of men to a cause wholly in themselves; native depravity traces them all back to another person; derives them from a cause which God alone could have hindered, and God alone can remove.

IV. We object once more to this doctrine — that *it casts reproach on the divine character and government.*

Our first instruction in religion is the reply to that solemn question of our Catechism, ' Who made you ?' Can we ever forget the holy awe, the melting tenderness, which possessed our minds, when, at the fond parent's

knee we uttered that truth, which so mysteriously connected us with the mighty power of Heaven, and the wide universe below? Can we ever forget the new feeling of alliance to every object around us, which sprung from our first conceptions of the meaning of the words 'God made me and all things?' Can we ever forget the sweet emotions of confidence and love, which rushed into the heart, when the revered instructer taught us what God was, by giving him his own name, and directing to our Almighty Creator, the soft affections which already bound us to himself? And, in after life, at those sad, melancholy moments, when the consciousness of our unworthiness has weighed down our spirits, and we have contemplated the iniquity of our fellow-creatures with deepest sorrow; when triumphant vice has cast its baleful glare upon our path, and fraud, oppression, cruelty, stung the soul to madness; have we not felt it a blessed refuge to remember God? Yes, we have turned gladly away from the heart-sickening scenes of an evil world to hold peaceful communion with the Just and Holy One. We have been comforted by the thought that in him virtue still had a friend, and innocence a protector; but alas! the doctrine of depravity takes away this last refuge. God made us, indeed, but how? He made us what we were when we began to live — when we were born, and if we were born depraved, he made us so. Thus, then, surrounded with a throng of miserable creatures 'under the wrath and curse of God,' utterly sinful, and capable of nothing better, we can only look upward to the Being who made them what they are, and see in Heaven but the God who has created that sin

which defiles the earth. The pall of moral death hangs over the tainted mass of human society ; and above are spread out the black clouds of vengeance before the throne of him, who waits but till he can gather a *few* out of the corrupt multitude, to *save* them, and then will pour out upon our heads his burning vials ; and begin, in our helpless souls, a series of torments, which shall never be mitigated and never end.

In other words, the doctrine of depravity teaches us, that, having given us a nature entirely corrupt, incapable of good, and prone to all evil, God placed us in this world with a command to do what he knows we cannot do ; and then condemns us to eternal wo for doing that which he knows we cannot help doing. He continually afflicts us for sins, which can only be prevented by an influence of his spirit ; while that he purposely withholds. Moreover, taken in connexion with its kindred doctrines, this teaches us that it was the divine will from all eternity that human beings *should* act just as they *do*, and perish everlastingly, for having acted thus ; that God selected out of the human race, before *they* were created, or the *world was*, a certain definite number, concerning whom he determined that they *should* be holy and happy ; and the rest he *made to be* sinners, that in punishing them he might glorify his vindictive justice. Or, to come nearer still, although we all have the same corrupt nature, and deserve one no more than another from our Creator, he is pleased, by an act of his power, to make a part of us new creatures ; giving them power and disposition to do his will, and rewarding them for obe-

dience ; leaving the remainder as morally helpless as they were born, and then punishing them for disobedience.

We can never reconcile such views of the divine government with what the Bible, reason, and nature, all proclaim respecting it. Is God *impartial* to give his spirit, which all alike need, and for the same reason, a reason out of their reach, to a few only ? Is God *just* to punish us for the consequences of not possessing a new heart, when he alone can give it to us ? Is God *merciful* to make us with a nature which is incapable of goodness, and then inflicting endless torments on us for not being good ? Turn this doctrine which way you will, it is equally unworthy of the Creator and Father of mankind. And the only possible solution to the overwhelming mystery of such a method of treating his creatures, is divine sovereignty. God does so because he chooses to do so ; and none can say to him, ' Why dost thou this ?' A similar apology to that for the cruelties of an earthly despot ; and one as valid in that case as in this ; it is no apology at all. Power gives no right ; will alters not what in itself is bad. The very thing to be explained is, how God *can* thus will what in itself is so unrighteous and cruel. — But He has not so willed, and blessed be his Holy Name ! we are not compelled to receive such opinions as his truth. We have not so learned Christ.

V. The doctrine of native depravity is further shown to be false by *its inconsistency with the design of our present life as probationary.*

We are placed in this world to be trained by a course

of discipline and trial, for another; preparation is our great work here; this all admit; this the Scriptures teach. On any other supposition, human life cannot be explained. But in the very idea of probation, it is implied, that the subject to be proved has not yet a *fixed* character when the trial begins. And if we are sent into this world to *prepare* for another, it is to be presumed that we are not already fitted, when we enter it, for the doom which that preparation is intended to decide. Nor can we imagine that God would appoint a long series of moral discipline, and provide an ample store of moral means, for the training of a creature, whom he knew to be incapable of deriving the least benefit from them.

According to this doctrine, however, we come into life with a fixed character; we are then decidedly, entirely, and for aught we can ever do, incurably wicked. We are 'under the wrath and curse of God, and liable to the pains of hell forever.' If so how can the days or years which may follow, be termed a season of probation? We deserve hell as soon as we are born; can we ever deserve more? Our doom is decided at the outset, and cannot be the *consequence* of a trial which it *precedes*. In fact, to talk of trial here, is idle and absurd. Especially when we recollect that it is also declared by the advocates of this doctrine, that nothing less than a special irresistible agency of God can ever alter the character we bring with us into the world. Such an agency, says Dr Chalmers, as would be requisite to turn *stones* into *bread*. Such an agency, says another, as was put forth in creating the world. And to hasten, retard, or even procure this divine interposition, is alike impossible, let us do

what we may. It lies in the counsel of his own will, and God only knows how, when, or on whom the regenerating grace shall descend. If any one share the blessing, his change of character will be as much the *sole* act of God, as if he had himself been without sense or motion up to the very moment of its occurrence. In his own time God will operate on the soul for its recovery. Till then, existence is a mere blank. We can lose nothing, since all was lost at the beginning ; we can gain nothing, because all we do prior to regeneration, is done in vain ; we are not made worse by the neglect of moral means, for it is impossible to be more than *totally* depraved ; we are not improved by the use of them, for that would detract from the sovereignty of divine grace, to which, as the *sole* unaided cause, all change for the better is attributed. Now, I may ask, if there is any probation where a man is neither made better nor worse, gains nothing, and loses nothing, and is left just as he was found ? It is idle to pretend so ; as idle as to call that a race for victory, in which one is compelled to run against another, but is told, at the outset, that it is determined to crown his companion, and not him, be the result what it may.

There are many important facts, which, while they go to establish the doctrine that the present life is probationary, are not to be reconciled with the doctrine that men are born totally depraved. For instance, how *various* are the actions of mankind. But for this variety of action, there is no room, on the supposition that we are entirely wicked before we have done anything. Were this true, we should persist in one unvaried series of sins, with not a virtuous thought or wish intervening. Ask

now your own history for its reports ; does it give in only a tale of ceaseless guilt ? Do you remember no time when you were comparatively innocent ? Do you find far back among your early days, no sincere prayers, no pure desires, no good resolutions, no kindness for man, and no fear of God ? Be it that you feel yourself a sinner, yea, one of the deepest die ; yet, were you always as bad as you are now ? Would your chance for salvation have been no better, if you had died in infancy, than if you were summoned to day ? Admit this, and you give up native depravity ; for that teaches that all men are liable to eternal wo as soon as they come into the world ; more than that cannot be awarded in any case. But where punishment is equal, the guilt must be presumed so.

The phenomena of Habit, likewise, furnish us with an argument. By slow degrees, and the most gradual advances only, we become established in our moral habits. Here a virtue may be forsaken, and there a vice approached ; but such instances must occur often, before the indulgence can become habitual sin, and virtue be wholly renounced. There is a reluctance to be overcome at each stage of vice, as there is an effort to be made at each advance in improvement. But would a being whose nature is totally depraved, require much time to reconcile him to evil practice ? Could he shrink from sin in any shape ? Could he feel the least reluctance to enter the only appropriate, and therefore, it would seem, the only easy course of action for him ?

Look now at Education, Example, and all other great moral instruments; their effects are infinitely diversified,

and incalculably great. But we shall find it hard to account for this, on the supposition that all men begin life with a settled character, and a bias toward evil so strong that divine power alone is sufficient to overcome it. Indeed, when external influence produces pernicious consequences, we know the subject affected was not as bad before, as he was capable of becoming. And when they cause good results, we know the subject must have had a capacity for virtue.

VI. Lastly, *the Scriptures afford us a far different view of human nature from that presented by the doctrine we have attempted to refute.* They everywhere take it for granted, that a man is a sinner only through his own act and choice. 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall *not* bear the iniquity of the father. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. Every tree is known by its *own* fruit. He that *committeth* sin, trangresseth the law. Know ye not that to whom ye yield *yourselves* servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness. He that doeth righteousness *is* righteous.'

The sacred volume contains many severe *Rebukes* pointed at offenders. But rebuke is unjust where the offence could not be avoided, and is the consequence of something else, and not our own choice.

There are also numerous pathetic *Lamentations* and *Remonstrances* addressed in the name of God, to his erring creatures. 'Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments. Turn ye, for why will ye die?

What could I have done more for my vineyard that I have not done? How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a bird gathereth her brood under her wings, and ye would not. O that thou hadst known! My people will not consider.' Now such language as this, is mere mockery of human wo, unless it was by their own conduct, the guilt lamented was incurred, and unless they had power to do otherwise. Why lament an evil which he himself had caused, by bringing them into the world with a depraved nature, and which none but he can ever cure? It is impossible to reconcile these expostulations with the idea, that, at any moment, the occasion might instantly have been removed by the divine power, and that without a special interposition on the part of God, there was no possibility of its removal. We ought to consider them as sincere; and if we do, we must conclude that the people concerned in them, had been the authors of their own ruin, and always possessed the ability to prevent it.

The Bible abounds with *Precepts*. For whom? A being, who, by his nature, is utterly unable to observe them?

The views of future *Retribution*, exhibited in the same volume, are so many contradictions to native depravity. We are taught that we shall be judged by our *deeds*. And they only, who have *done* evil, shall arise to condemnation. But what influence have our deeds upon that sentence, which was passed ages ago on the whole race, and by which we are 'liable to the pains of hell?' The judgment is already completed, when we begin the race of life, and cannot be reversed by all we

may perform. Is this being rewarded according to our deeds?

All men are represented, as alike interested in the blessings of Christianity, and its invitations are accordingly addressed to all with the same earnestness. Jesus knew what was in man, both our strength and our weakness. He was without guile. He ever spake the truth. If, then, these calls of divine goodness were not designed for every one's acceptance, or if none had power to comply with them, would he not have said so? If our natural depravity be the origin and cause of all our actual offences, would he not have said so? He might have lamented our blindness, but he could not have asked, 'Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?' He might have been anxious for our unbelief, but could not have inquired, 'Why do ye not believe?' He might have exhorted us to wait patiently for the coming of the Holy Ghost, but could not have upbraided us for a guilt which that coming only could terminate. He might have expatiated on the miseries of our condition, but could not have held up the promises which concerned none but the elect, to a dying world; thus adding fresh anguish to their helpless woes.

But we are *not* taught in the New Testament that our nature is depraved. Our Lord once exclaimed, 'How *can* ye believe, who seek honor one of another,' but never, 'How *can* ye believe, who were altogether born in sins.' He uniformly ascribes the ruin of the wicked to their own immediate fault, and not to any foreign cause, least of all to one prior to their existence. There are no words in the Bible, by which a bare statement of the

doctrine we oppose, can be made out, with even a show of fairness. From a few passages it has been extorted, however; and the candid reader of Scripture may justly express surprise at the manner in which a sentiment, so inconsistent with its whole spirit and instructions, has been drawn from it. As I have before observed, most of the passages relied upon in the argument, contain vivid and striking descriptions of the vices of particular men, communities, or generations. Some only declare the general truth, 'There is no man that liveth and sinneth not.' And scarce one can, even by force, be made to allude to human nature itself, abstractly considered.

Three texts are cited always on this occasion; and they are all which I shall now noticer; both because the mode of interpretation which applies to these, may apply to every other which is referred to, and because the constant use of these, shows the dearth of good proof sufficiently to indicate the weakness of the cause they are supposed to establish.

One of these passages lies in the 51st Psalm. David is there giving utterance to some very strong emotions of his heart, excited by the recollections of his own crimes. The whole piece is an exercise of private, personal devotion, and should be interpreted as such. Shall we take up his words and analyze them, as if they were the language, not of emotion, but cold philosophy? Shall we read his Psalm as a lecture, instead of an humble prayer of private penitence? If any one supposes David designed to be understood literally, when he says, 'I was shapen in iniquity,' then let him be consistent, and equally literal in such sentences as the following; 'The

wicked go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.' That is, infants speak as soon as they come into the world, and they speak lies too. 'Rivers of water run down mine eyes.' Here you may imagine his cheeks two channels or beds of rivers. 'Purge me with hyssop.' That is, take the herb hyssop and cleanse me. 'Break the teeth of the young lions.' 'There is no soundness in my flesh, because of my sins.' It is easily seen to what absurdities we are led by this mode of interpretation; yet no reason exists for applying it to the words of the penitential hymn, which does not equally require its use in those just recited. The truth is, all these passages are properly regarded as the expressions which naturally suggest themselves to the mind of an Oriental poet, in a state of strong emotion; but not as literal representations of fact or opinion.

Ephesians ii. 3, is another text much relied upon in this argument. 'And were, by nature, children of wrath, even as others.' To whom is this said? To persons recently converted from *idolatry;* who had, in times past, 'walked according to the prince of the power of the air, who were Gentiles in the flesh, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.' This heathenish state with its attendant vices, Paul contrasts with the condition into which Christianity had brought them. The phrase, 'by nature' occurs in another Epistle, in a manner which illustrates its meaning here. 'We, who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles.' Now it is certain, Paul does not intend their nature as human beings, for that is peculiar to no nation, and makes us simply *men*, not Jews nor Gentiles. The latter clause proves that

we are to understand the former thus, if any proof were needed. For sin, as an attribute of man, is surely not limited by national divisions, and the phrase 'sinners of the Gentiles' would have no sense, if we did not know that by this title, the Jews were accustomed to distinguish idolaters from their own people. To be a Jew by nature, is to be one by parentage, education, and affinity. 'Children of wrath, children of disobedience,' are terms significant of the actual character of those to whom they apply, a character acquired by themselves, when they 'gave themselves over to lasciviousness, and walked according to the course of this world.' So Peter styles similar characters, 'cursed children,' indicating their liability to punishment for their vices. And, in like manner, virtuous Christians walk as 'children of the light.' If any one prefers to understand the Apostle as affirming that the Ephesians were proper subjects of divine wrath, on account of their birth simply, without any regard to their own subsequent conduct, he may enjoy his opinion. But he turns aside entirely from the argument of the writer, to hang a fond notion of his own upon the naked words.

The only remaining passage I shall notice, lies in the Epistle to the Corinthians. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God.' A wrong translation alone, occasions the least mistake here. The Greek word does not signify what the English term implies. Its true meaning is expressed in Jude xix, 'sensual.' So also in James iii. 15, 'sensual' is the rendering. It is found in three places in this Epistle besides the passage just quoted. Paul, speaking of the human frame, says,

it is 'sown a natural body.' He means, 'a fleshly body.' This expresses his sentiment more clearly; for 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom.' The Apostle, in the chapter containing the words under discussion, declares, respecting the future happiness of the good, that 'eye hath not seen the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, but God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit.' In reference to the same things, he afterwards says, the natural or sensual man, he who is immersed in sensual indulgences, receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; that is, the things which he hath revealed unto us by his spirit. 'They are foolishness unto him.' Why? Because spiritual joys, the bliss of virtue, has no charms for the sensualist. 'Neither can he know them.' Why? 'Because they are spiritually discerned.' They are of a purely intellectual and spiritual nature; they are not to be understood or valued by one whose gross mind is bound to the earth, and who has never experienced a felicity which has no relation to the gratifications of sense. His moral perceptions and taste, are blunted, obscure, perverse. He sees no attractions in the prospect of a happiness, whose nature he cannot comprehend, — whose worth he is incapable of appreciating. Let his mind be spiritualized — let it be restored to purity and virtue, he will then discern spiritual things.

Before I close this protracted discussion, allow me for a moment to advert to some popular charges, brought against those who adopt our views of the subject we have been considering.

1. It is often alleged that we diminish the evil of sin, make it a trifling matter, and are disposed to think most men good enough as they are. But how does this appear? Our argument concerns a false account of the origin, and a very exaggerated statement of the amount of sin among mankind. We leave room for the whole mass of facts which have been, or may be gathered out of human history, to prove that a man is a sinner, and a great sinner too. But we stand in front of these facts, and beg our opponents not to add to them a pile of their fanciful creation. We think that there is as much danger of overstating in a case of this kind, as there is where only an individual's reputation is concerned. We desire only to have the *whole* truth told. And beside the dark picture of guilt, we would hang that of virtue, and point to the one as well as to the other, when we are describing man. It surely does not affect the *magnitude* of any evil to trace it to one, rather than another *source*. Or if it does, the evil of sin is enhanced by a doctrine which attributes it to every man's own folly, and perverse abuse of his nature, instead of deriving it from that nature itself, which, being a gift of God, ought to be presumed worthy of the giver. We do not make sin an *infinite* evil, for the same reason that our opponents do not make virtuous qualities infinite. There *can* be nothing infinite in a *finite* being. We do not deny that there is much wickedness among men; we believe that the whole world once 'lay in wickedness.' But we are unwilling, for the sake of accounting for this amount of guilt, to resort to a theory which makes God its author. No man, in his right mind, can regard sin as

a 'trifle.' We believe every form of it a subject of great sorrow. With intense anxiety have we seen the mad course of the ungodly, and we lift up our voices with our brethren, to entreat them to fly from the wrath to come. And we can do this with more consistency, for our peculiar views of the point in question. Not sheltering ourselves under the broad covering of native, hereditary, *given* corruption, we are compelled to feel more earnestly the danger to which we have exposed ourselves by our acquired guilt. We look at sin as it is exhibited in the individual transgressor, and are thus assisted in our efforts to impress its evil on our hearts, and fill them with apprehension at the thought of partaking it. All excuse is taken away, where each one is represented as the author of his own ruin.

The standard of christian holiness is common to all Christians. We compare men with Jesus, and the precepts of Jesus. Thus we judge of their virtues, and their depravity. This can hardly produce the fault of thinking the majority good enough as they are. None are good enough; regenerate or unregenerate, we all come far short of the mark of our high calling. It is not always they who most decry the virtue of mankind, that most justly appreciate their sins, or feel the most solicitude for their improvement.

2. It is also alleged that we take away the proper ground of *humility*. In reply, I need only remind you of a well known principle. That which we possess in common with everybody else, never makes us proud. So that which we suppose all the world has as well as we, never causes the feeling of humility. You are not proud

because you are a rational animal. You are not humble, because you are no angel; you may be proud of that which raises you above others, and humbled by that which sinks you in their esteem. If human nature be depraved, yet it is no more so in one, than all; and therefore, I believe few would venture to assert, that they are humbled by the thought of native depravity alone. No: humility is a just sense of our *own* imperfections and unworthiness; and he will have the most of it who compares, most faithfully, his heart and life, with the characters which deserve admiration, and perceives his want of resemblance; who studies his duty well, and understands the defects in his performance of it. We are not disposed to boast of our humility; but there is nothing in our opinions which destroy it. There *is* a spiritual pride whose appropriate food is sought in rehearsing to others, the corruptions it really does not feel ashamed of; and bemoaning a guilt, the charge of which, it would resent, should it come from another's lips.

3. Again, we are accused of undervaluing 'the great Salvation' by our views of human nature; but just the opposite is true. It is for the very reason that we think as we do of our nature, that we are disposed to set a high value on the christian scheme of mercy. We feel that by our sins, we have done a wrong to ourselves, the most mournful and dangerous. We compare the nature God has given us, which is 'but a little lower than the angels,' with our own conduct, and confess that we deserve a heavy punishment for so degrading it. We look up to the bright eminence, from which the sinner falls, and bless more earnestly the hand which lifts him from

the dust, and leads him back to virtue and to God. We welcome the Saviour, who comes to restore self-ruined men. But did we believe that God gave us at first, a ruined nature, and sent us helpless and abandoned into the waste, howling wilderness, with no capacity to do good, and condemned to woes eternal for doing evil, we should not value highly the grace which afterward calls home a few of us, leaving all besides, to perish without relief. We do not, and we cannot feel grateful for a Gospel made up of decrees of election, irresistible influences, and eternal death. But we rejoice, yea, and will rejoice, in that Gospel of the blessed God, which reveals a Saviour to the world, and opening wide the gates of Heaven, proclaims the soul-cheering words, 'Whosoever will, let him come.' We do, and we will give thanks to the Father of Jesus, and of us, that he sent his Son to turn us from our iniquities, reconcile us to himself, and, by forming us to virtue here, prepare us for a holy rest hereafter.

Brethren, while we divert your attention from false views of human nature, and strive to banish them from your minds, we still call upon you to look steadfastly to the characters you have yourselves acquired. If, for the sin of our first father, we be neither guilty nor exposed to punishment, for our own, we most assuredly are. May God incline our hearts to repentance, cherish in us every good desire and affection, fill us with the love of his own perfections, and give us fervent charity toward all mankind!

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DISCOURSE.

MARK XIII, 32.

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

AMONGST the many accusations which, to the great disgrace of their common profession, Christians of differing sects have been in the habit of heaping upon each other, none, I hope and believe, is more entirely groundless and unjust than that which ascribes to the maintainers of the strict personal unity of the Deity, a wish to degrade the character of the Son of God, and to depreciate the value of that salvation which he was sent into the world to bestow upon our frail and sinful race. There is not a single assignable motive which could possibly induce such a wish. What that character is in which the messenger of the Most High has really appeared, and what the true import of his message, it is equally the interest of all to ascertain; and to pay him honor due is a duty, which all owe alike to him that sent him.

Wilfully to offer the slightest indignity to the person of the ambassador, every one must know, is to offend the

king. Wilfully to degrade the Son is to offer a direct insult to the Father. Where is the sect or society, I will not say of Christians, but of reasonable beings, that could be guilty of such gratuitous wickedness and folly; of rebellion against heaven, without even the chance of a miserable recompense on earth? That such an accusation should be merited is impossible. That it should have been preferred is a lamentable proof of the force of prejudice and passion, even when opposed to the clearest dictates of the understanding and the best feelings of the heart. No, whatever our opinions are, or whatever may be thought of them, our object, I trust, is good; our intentions, at least, are holy and pure; they are the same which we gladly ascribe to our fellow Christians, and believe to actuate every serious and conscientious member of every opposing sect. We follow after truth. The desire of our hearts is to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent: to seek the Lord, in whom we live, and move, and have our being, if haply we may feel after him and find him; and to honor the Son in like manner, though, we honestly think, we dare not, in the same degree as we honor the Father.

To detract from the dignity of him whom we call Lord and Master: to lessen him in the eyes of the world, who loved us with perfect love, and laid down his life for us, a spotless and a willing sacrifice; to undervalue the great salvation that brings light, and life, and immortality to the remotest and darkest corners of the earth; to trample under foot the Son of God, and to count the blood of Jesus, which sealed the covenant, an unholy thing; far be such guilt and such ingratitude from our hearts. Firmly, yet temperately, we deny the imputa-

tion, and are ready, I trust, every one of us, to appeal, with humble confidence, for the sincerity and truth of that denial, to the God whom we adore, and to the Saviour whom, though we do not worship as God, we revere and love as the Son of God, and for the wealth of worlds would not wrong. If we deny any honor to our great Redeemer, it is only that which we humbly conceive he would himself have rejected as unfit for his acceptance; nay, more, which we are persuaded that he did directly and explicitly reject. Far from designing to dishonor and degrade our Master, we believe that we best comply with his wishes, and obey his will, when we distinguish between him and the Father who sent him; when through him we pay to God the profoundest homage of the prostrate soul, and refuse, even in thought, to elevate to equal honors any other being.

Jesus himself, we feel convinced, would thus have acted, and would have shrunk, with undissembled horror, from the thought of assuming the place of Deity, or accepting even the semblance of that homage which he always paid himself, and taught his followers to pay to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God. "Why callest thou me good?" were his own words to the lawyer that addressed him by the title of good master, "none is good but one, that is God."* "If ye loved me," said he, on another occasion, "ye would rejoice because I said I go unto the Father, for my Father is greater than I."† And, again, speaking of his departure from this world, he says, "In that day ye shall ask me nothing; verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye

* Mark x, 17, 18. † John xiv, 28.

shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."* By such passages as these, which we cannot help deeming sufficiently clear and explicit, as well as by the general tenor of the discourses of Jesus, we think ourselves fully borne out in the belief, that our conduct has the sanction and approbation of our blessed Master himself, and that he who was meek and lowly of heart, will discern in our refusal of divine honors to his person, not a want of love and reverence for him — far from it — but, on the contrary, a strong desire to obey his precepts and follow his example; to serve the God whom he served in spirit and in truth; and to pay the homage of supreme veneration and love, where he declared it to be due, even to that Being whom he has pronounced greater than himself, and to whom, in the end of all things, an apostle expressly assures us, he shall resign his delegated power, "delivering up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and being subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."†

No, if we refuse to Jesus the titles and honors of Deity, it is not because we do not love, it is not because we do not venerate him; for we do love him, as under God our dearest and best friend, as our Saviour that died for us; and we do venerate him, as that beloved Son of God in whom the Father was well pleased, and solemnly declared that he was so; but it is because we dare not offer to Jesus homage, which, if we understand him aright, he has forbidden us to offer, and has declared that he will reject; we dare not call him God who claims only to be the son of God, and who, in our

* John xvi, 23. † 1 Cor. xv, 24—28.

sincere and deliberate opinion, would refuse to accept a higher title.

But our views, say those who differ from us, are erroneous, our scruples groundless, and our interpretations of Scripture wrong. Suppose it were so — grant for a moment that we have been mistaken — what then? Are we therefore enemies to Christ and his cross? Because we have erred, must it therefore follow that we have wilfully and wickedly erred? Such may be the opinion of some well-meaning followers of Christ; but not such, I am persuaded, would be the decision of the great Master himself. Even whilst he corrected our errors, he would approve our adherence to the dictates of conscience; and would forgive our scruples and our heresies, how weak and ignorant soever, provided they were serious and sincere. Were it true that beneath the disguise of the servant and the son, we had failed to discover the latent Deity, he would nevertheless pardon us if he found, that though his nearer presence was unperceived, that Deity was always loved and reverenced by us, and these feelings were testified by the honorable reception of his supposed ambassador, and prompt attention to his will as soon as shown.

Were a mighty monarch to assume the character of one of his own servants, and to travel in disguise to some distant corner of his kingdom, would he, I pray you, mark those of his subjects as rebellious and disloyal, who, though they deemed him far remote, nor dreamed of his presence with them, should yet speak of him with warm affection and unfeigned respect, and receive his will as law? Would he record it as a crime inexpiable, if, through ignorance, they could not discover the person

of the real monarch in that of the apparent servant? Would he denounce vengeance against them because they did not render to the supposed messenger of majesty the homage due only to majesty itself? Would he not, on the contrary, be pleased to find that their loyalty had taught them to make a scrupulous distinction; to honor the servants of the king as such, but to reserve for the monarch himself, with watchful care and true allegiance, those higher honors which the monarch only has a right to claim? Assuredly it would be so, nor should we, for the case is exactly parallel, have the least ground to apprehend our Saviour's displeasure, even on the supposition that our sentiments were erroneous, and our conceptions of his person and dignity inadequate and defective.

For my own part, had I much less reason to be satisfied of the truth of my opinions, than I feel persuaded that I have, I should not on this head entertain the slightest apprehension. I might fear that my inquiries had not been sufficiently diligent, that I had not searched the Scriptures in the spirit and manner that I should have done; but I should entirely acquit myself, and I can truly assert that I could do so with a conviction of perfect sincerity, of the remotest approach to a wish to degrade, in the least degree, the character of my Saviour. Of such conduct, feeling myself incapable, I should not fear to be accused even at the awful bar of the Searcher of hearts; and compared with this, to be judged of man's judgment is indeed a very little thing.

Let us only be convinced, on good grounds, that we love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; let the test of that sincerity be our active and cheerful obedience to his

will, our piety, our benevolence, our self-government, our conversation, in short, becoming the Gospel of Christ; and be assured, our revered master will not count us enemies, though in that great day when truth alone shall stand, and all the vanities of human opinion shall shrink and disappear before the eye of Omniscience as dew-drops before the sun; though in that day, I say, it should be found that our peculiar opinions also have been of the number of these vanities. Let us thus act; and the countenance whose light will purge our sins, and disperse our errors, and enlighten our darkness, will beam a look of love and mercy upon us; our fearful trembling souls shall be enlightened and purified, but fear not, brethren; they shall live.

That which I hope and believe for myself, I hope and believe for all my Christian brethren, even for those who differ most widely from me. I deem them in error certainly, in gross error, in error which it is of material importance to the interests of Christianity and the Christian world to remove; but I do not therefore doubt their safety; I do not question their final acceptance with the Father. God forbid. I know, and my heart would be narrow indeed if I did not rejoice to know, that there are many burning and shining lights among them; many who are well prepared to meet the bridegroom; who are watching for the cry, "Behold he cometh;" whose lamps, ready trimmed, send up a bright and cheerful blaze; of whose oil it would be well if we could borrow. They may be in error; but what then? They are in charity, the love of God and man dwelleth richly in them, the law of Jesus is written on their hearts. God forbid that I should presume to try, by my petty scales of or-

thodoxy or heresy, call them which you please, those who have been weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and not found wanting. A heart right with God, a conduct and a conscience void of offence, an unfeigned and an active love of the Father, and of the brethren, these will far outweigh the most erroneous sentiments; these are the pure and solid gold, compared with which, a creed or a confession, whether mine or yours, is but a feather in the scale.

Let me quote, on this subject, the words of a late distinguished ornament of the established church, words which ought to find a responsive echo in the heart of every real Christian. "It is difficult," says Bishop Watson, in the admirable preface to his collection of theological tracts, "for any man entirely to divest himself of prejudice, but he may surely take care that it be not accompanied with an uncharitable propensity to stigmatize, with reproachful appellations, those who cannot measure the rectitude of the divine dispensations by his rule, nor seek their way by insisting on the path, which he, in his overweening wisdom, has arrogantly prescribed as the only one which can lead men thither. If different men, in carefully and conscientiously examining the Scriptures, should arrive at different conclusions, even on points of the least importance, we trust that God, who alone knows what every man is capable of, will be merciful to him that is in error. We trust," he adds, with a generous candor which it grieves me to call singular, "that he will pardon the Unitarian if he be in error, because he has fallen into it from the dread of becoming an idolater, of giving that glory to another, which he conceives to be due to God alone. If the worshipper

of Jesus Christ be in an error, we trust that God will pardon his mistake, because he has fallen into it from a dread of disobeying what he conceives to be revealed concerning the nature of the Son, or commanded concerning the honor to be given him. Both are actuated by the same principle, the fear of God; and though that principle impels them into different roads, it is our hope and belief, that if they add to their faith charity, they will meet in heaven." Beautiful and truly evangelic conclusion!

Whilst, however, we strongly and earnestly maintain, on this and every other subject, the innocence of involuntary error; and, as occasion requires, are either willing to urge this doctrine as a plea for charity towards ourselves, or happy to employ it as a motive for charity towards our brethren; let us not be mistaken. Let it not be thought that any acknowledged or lurking suspicion of the soundness of our faith is the source of our anxiety to prove this point. No, we too believe, as firmly as those who differ from us, and we think, upon surer and more solid grounds, that the truth is with us. We too are fully persuaded in our own minds; at least as much so as any persons can be, who make no pretensions to infallibility, but build their faith, with prayers for divine assistance, upon scripture, interpreted by reason. If we are anxious to prove that error, when unintentional, is innocent, it is not that we are fearful lest the charge of *error* should be brought home to us, but because we are desirous that, at all events, the charge of *uncharitableness* never should. We would not have it thought that we esteem and love our fellow Christians less, because their opinions are different from ours; nor, on the

other hand, are we willing to forfeit their affection and regard, on the ground that our opinions are different from theirs.

We certainly do feel it an evil, a great and serious evil, to have the right hand of fellowship refused to us, and to be treated as aliens from the family of Jesus Christ. We are willing therefore, and even anxious, so far as a paramount regard to truth and honesty will permit, to soften the prejudices, and conciliate the good will of our opponents. Consistently with that supreme, inviolable allegiance, which we owe to the Father of all, we would do much to secure the love and confidence of our brethren. If we cannot persuade them that our opinions are true, we shall rejoice, nevertheless, to convince them that they are innocent. If they will believe that we are in error, we will at least endeavor to prove to them, if possible, that our error is involuntary; that it is perfectly consistent with an unfeigned and fervent love of God, of Jesus Christ, and of our fellow men; that it neither has its source nor its issue in sin; that it need not therefore be a wall of separation, to divide us from those to whom we might otherwise be dear. It must not however, I repeat it, be supposed, when for the sake of that charity, for which honesty and virtue are the only sacrifice we cannot make, we argue thus, that we therefore entertain any serious doubts as to the truth of our sentiments, or mean to represent them as *merely innocent*. We believe them to be not merely innocent, but *true*, and it is with the view of establishing the truth of one of the leading tenets, which distinguished us from the majority of our fellow professors, that I have made choice of the words of my text, as affording matter for profitable reflection.

"Of that day and that hour," says our Saviour, "no one* knoweth; no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." In this clear and explicit declaration of our blessed Lord, we have, in my opinion, a direct and unanswerable confutation of the doctrine of those, who would confer upon him a dignity to which he never aspired, and elevate him to an equality with that Being, who alone knoweth the end from the beginning, and is absolutely perfect in knowledge and wisdom, as in power. Here we have a proof, which cannot be controverted, that the meek and lowly Jesus neither was, nor claimed to be, co-equal with the Father; that though he was one with him, in intimate communion and in love, the willing agent of his perfect will, in which sense he prayed that his disciples might be so likewise, he pretended not to a participation of the same infinite attributes, or the same essential nature; nor ever wished to assume a higher title than that of the Son of God, sent into the world with derived knowledge and delegated power.

The possession of one attribute, at least essential to Deity, omniscience, is here expressly disclaimed. "Of that day and hour," says he, speaking, as most commentators suppose, of the day of judgment, or as some think, (perhaps more agreeably to the context, though it matters not for our present argument,) of the precise time of the destruction of Jerusalem: "Of that day and hour knoweth no one; no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." From the lips

* This is the correct translation of the original pronoun.

of our Saviour himself then, we have the declaration, that there was a part of the divine plan of which he was ignorant; one day and hour at least, of those times and seasons which the Father had put in his own power, that it was not given him to know. That single day or hour is abundantly sufficient for our argument. Ignorance of the minutest particular of the plan of providence, is as inconsistent with the nature of Deity, as ignorance of the whole. He could not be God, to whom every atom in the boundless immensity of space, and every moment in the endless duration of eternity, was not perfectly known.

And here we may observe, that while the smallest degree of ignorance, on any subject how trifling soever, must disprove, beyond contradiction, the Deity of him who confesses or discovers it; the possession, on the contrary, of stores of knowledge, inconceivable by any human imagination, fathomless by any human mind, boundless so far as such a mind can perceive, would not be in itself sufficient to establish the Godhead of the possessor. We may pronounce with certainty, that he is *not* God who is ignorant of any thing; but of him, who, to our finite comprehension, should appear to know all things, we could not therefore pronounce that he was God. Ignorance, we know, in the minutest quantity, cannot co-exist with omniscience; but there is no degree of knowledge, how wonderful soever, of which we can affirm that it could not be derived, of which we can assert that it is absolutely infinite, and can exist only in an infinite being. Where we clearly see a bound, we may infer a finite nature; but from our not perceiving a bound, we cannot infer an infinite.

To apply this remark to the subject under consideration, if it should appear that there was any part of the plan of providence of which Jesus was ignorant, the conclusion would be unavoidable, that Jesus *is not* God, whereas the opposite conclusion, that he *is* so, would not follow from his appearing to possess the most perfect knowledge of all the subjects that the human imagination can conceive. The smallest degree of imperfection is sufficient to prove an imperfect nature. The highest degree of excellence that *we* can appreciate will not prove perfection. What portion of knowledge, power, wisdom and goodness, the supreme disposer may see fit to communicate to an inferior nature, we cannot determine; but we can determine with infallible certainty, that he who is in any respect deficient in these attributes cannot be the Supreme.

Those of our fellow Christians, therefore, who maintain, in the strict sense, the Deity of our Lord, are completely refuted by the passage before us, if we admit its obvious and literal meaning to be likewise the true one; nor can I conceive that it would be otherwise, though it should appear, (which, I shall hereafter show, is very far from being the real state of the case,) that there was no other passage, in the christian scriptures, of similar import. They who maintain that Jesus Christ was perfect God, must surely mean, if words have meaning, that in his mind were concentrated all the infinite attributes, and that his will could wield all the infinite powers of Deity. But what can more directly and clearly refute this supposition than our Saviour's express declaration, that there were, in the eternal counsels of the Father, a day and hour that he knew not, that were, in fact, hidden

from him? Can we suppose, for a moment, that he who made this open declaration either regarded himself as the Omniscient One, or wished to be so regarded?

I am well aware, however, that the maintainers of the doctrine in question have made some attempts, I doubt not from the best and purest motives, to give this passage an interpretation corresponding with their general views. These attempts we are now to examine.

And, in the first place, it is said, that when our blessed Lord imputes to himself imperfection, or anything that implies it, we are to regard him as speaking, not of his divine but of his human nature. As a human being, they say, he might be ignorant of many things, though as God he was omniscient. Jesus Christ, the man, might not know what Jesus Christ, the second person of the Godhead, did. Are we then to understand, we may ask in reply, that the divine and human nature, in the person of our Saviour, were perfectly distinct; so much so that there were subjects on which they held no communication, and were variously informed? Are we to understand that those same organs of speech, of which the divine nature made use at one time, to proclaim its omniscience, were employed by the human nature at another, to declare the imperfection of its knowledge? Are we to understand, in short, that two different beings, a perfect and an imperfect, a finite and an infinite, occupied the same body; and spoke, and acted, at different times, in a different and inconsistent manner? Is this the doctrine which we are required to receive as the doctrine of scripture? — and must we, at the same time, believe that these natures, thus distinct and unconnected,

both in word and deed, were nevertheless so perfectly united as to form one indivisible person, one perfect deified man? Surely an opinion so monstrous, so made up of direct contradictions, cannot have the sanction of the word of truth. If the *mind* of Jesus was *one*, and this is not disputed, it could not, at the same time, have been informed and uninformed upon the same subject; the same idea could not at the same moment, have been present to, and absent from it.

Our Lord's assertion is, that he *knew not* the day and hour. Shall we then suppose him to mean, that though he did know it *as* the Deity, he did not know it *as* a man; or, in other words, that the particular portion of his nature which was human, was not the source of his knowledge? What is this but to ascribe to our blessed master words which, if explained by him, would have been found to contain nothing better, even upon the Trinitarian hypothesis, than a flat and unprofitable truism; and which, unexplained, could be regarded in no other light than as a mere equivocation. Let it be remembered, as a fair and legitimate, though I must think it will appear a startling consequence of this mode of interpretation, that our Lord might, consistently with his character and with truth, have denied in one place, in terms as strong and direct as he affirmed in another, — saying *I know*, one moment, and *I know not*, as confidently the next, — his knowledge of the human heart, of the circumstances of his own approaching death, of the destruction of Jerusalem, of the general resurrection and judgment, in short of every thing which, as a mere man, he could not have known. Those whose minds revolt

against such a theory and such a consequence, and who would not put an equivocation into the mouth of him who was "the truth," as well as "the way and the life," will probably agree with me, that Jesus would not have professed himself ignorant of that which he really knew, in any character or nature whatsoever, whether human or divine.

To suppose that the man, Christ Jesus, could, with truth and sincerity deny, what Jesus, the Divine Being, might, at the same time, have truly and sincerely affirmed, is certainly to suppose that the two natures were perfectly distinct; that there were subjects on which they did not communicate; and on which, therefore, the same mind was not employed to register their thoughts. It is to say, in short, that the words and actions of Jesus did not always flow from the same internal source; that though apparently, he was not really, one being, but that his outward and visible form was possessed and governed by two distinct regulating minds of opposite and inconsistent attributes. I think I may safely affirm that, amidst the multitude of opposing sects, there is not one that will pretend to maintain, upon scriptural grounds, such a doctrine as this.

The preceding remarks appear to me, I confess, quite conclusive against the interpretation in question. An additional argument, however, suggests itself, which may not be altogether undeserving of notice. It is derived from the bare consideration of the arrangement given to the words of my text, as they proceeded, according to the testimony of the evangelists, from our Saviour's lips.

"Of that day and hour," said he, "knoweth no one, no,

not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." Is it not obvious that a climax is here intended; that our Lord means to rise from the simple general affirmation, that no one knew it, to the stronger and more definite assertion, that it was not revealed to the angels in heaven, and thence higher still to the declaration, that it was unknown even to the Son of God himself?

If this observation be just, is not the conclusion inevitable, that our Lord here speaks of himself, not in his lowest but in his highest character, in that character in which he was superior to all the children of men, and even to the highest angels of the presence; in which he was inferior to God only? Indeed the very use of the term "the Son," unaccompanied by any restrictive epithet, and immediately succeeded by that of "the Father," points directly to the same conclusion. Let it be carefully observed then, that Jesus, at the very same time that he professes his own ignorance of a day and an hour fixed in the counsels of Omniscience, ranks himself above the angels, and assumes his highest title, whatever be its import, that of "the Son." What more can be wanting to show the fallacy of the interpretation alluded to! an interpretation which, though the words of the text should admit of it, neither reason nor scripture would justify; and which, though both reason and scripture should justify, the words of the text would not admit.

Such are the arguments, of the force of which you will judge, against the view which Trinitarian commentators *generally* give of this text, a view of it, however, with which I am happy to find a justly celebrated advocate of

trinitarian doctrine candidly confessing, that he has never felt himself satisfied. Another mode of explanation, which this gentleman suggests as preferable, and the only other, on that side of the question, at all deserving of notice, with which I am acquainted, I am now to examine.

"It is plain," says Mr. Wardlaw (I use his own words,) "that if the angels had known that day and that hour, it must have been by communication; that if men had known it, it must also have been by communication. That neither man nor angel knew it, is equivalent to — that God had not communicated the knowledge of it to them. It is of *knowledge received by communication* that our Saviour speaks; and as in passages before referred to, and in many others, he is represented, and represents himself, as sustaining an official character, and bearing a commission from the Father to men; the whole of the difficulty consists in considering him in Mark xiii, 32, as speaking of himself in this, his official capacity, and declaring that the time of the judgment was not among the things communicated to him as the commissioned messenger of the Father; that it was to remain a divine secret." And in another place he says—"In this way the Son did not *know* the day of judgment. He knew it not in his official capacity, as the commissioned ambassador of heaven to men. It formed no part of the divine communications to him in this character." "This view," he adds, "has always appeared to me much more rational and satisfactory than that which is commonly given, that he was ignorant of it in his human nature, although he knew it in his divine; a mode of explanation with which, I confess, I have never been well satisfied."

That the interpretation which this writer proposed to substitute for the more common and ancient one is ingenious, may, perhaps, be allowed, but that it is not by any means either "rational" or "satisfactory," I think a very little reflection will prove. "It is of knowledge received by communication," says Mr. Wardlaw, "that our Saviour speaks." This *assertion* contains, in fact, the whole jet of the argument, and this assertion may safely and confidently be denied. It is of knowledge generally that our Saviour speaks, without any perceptible reference, or trace of reference, to the source from which it was derived. When our Saviour declares, that the Father does know of that day and that hour, will it be asserted that he then speaks of, "knowledge received by communication?" Assuredly not. Where then is the necessity or the propriety of supposing such a designed limitation in the other cases? In whatever sense God is said "to know" of that day and hour; in the same sense it is natural to suppose that men, and angels, and the Son are said "not to know" of it. But knowledge simply is what is affirmed of the Father, and this, therefore, there is every reason to believe, is what is denied of men, and angels, and the Son.

What, let us inquire, would be the result, should we, according to the tenor of the observation above quoted, introduce the words "by a divine communication," or "in an official capacity," into the sentence, as explanatory of the particular species of knowledge meant? "Of that day and that hour knoweth no one, by divine communication, or in his official capacity, no, not the angels which are in heaven," (what, by the way, may I be al-

lowed to ask, is *their* official capacity in this case?) neither the Son, but the Father." [Surely to read the passage thus, is abundantly sufficient to prove, that thus it cannot be understood. Who can suppose that it is by communication from another, or in a character merely official, that God is said to know the day of visitation? The word employed, I repeat it, denotes nothing more than simple knowledge—"Of that day and hour no one *knoweth*,"—nor is there any thing in the sentence, or in the context, which can lead us for a moment to suppose, that it has any different meaning as applied to the Son, than when men, or angels, or the Father, are the subject of it.

It is the very same term which our Lord employs when he says, in a passage immediately connected with this "watch, therefore, for ye *know* not the day nor the hour;" and again, "If the good man of the house had *known* at what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through;" in both of which it is evident than the argument is founded solely on the want of knowledge, without any consideration of the source from which it was to flow, or the mode of obtaining it. It would have made little difference, probably, in the conduct of the good man of the house, whether he had received notice of the intention of the thieves, from the testimony of his own senses, or "by communication from another;" if he had "known" he would have "watched."

Had our Lord meant, as Mr. Wardlaw asserts, to say nothing more than that it was not in his commission to reveal that day and hour, though he possessed a perfect

knowledge of them, he might, surely, and would have chosen words far more significant of such a meaning, and less liable to misrepresentation. "Of that day and hour," he might have said, "knoweth no one, no, not the angels in heaven, but the Father and the Son; but it is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his power." No unprejudiced and candid critic, I am persuaded, will ever be able to extract from the passage before us, any other meaning than that which appears upon the very surface of it, viz. an ascription to the Father of knowledge withheld from every other being, even from the Son himself.

Laying aside all consideration of the text, the doctrine of the infinite knowledge of our blessed Lord, to confine our attention to this single attribute of Deity, does not, I think, by any means, appear to be the doctrine of Scripture. On the contrary, I am persuaded that the thoughtful and attentive, if likewise an unprejudiced reader of the New Testament, will find, not one or two, but *many* passages, that directly militate against it, and *none* in which it is clearly and unquestionably asserted. To enter at length into this inquiry, and to say all, or nearly all, that might be said in defence of the opinion just advanced, neither my time, nor my regard for those upon whose patience I have already trespassed, will permit me; I shall therefore endeavour to comprise, in a few brief observations, designed rather to *suggest* than to *supply* matter for reflection, what I have to say on this head.

And in the first place, it may be observed, we find in Scripture many express declarations, proceeding from the lips of our Lord himself, that the knowledge which

he possessed was not his own, but derived from him that sent him, from which, if admitted, it would seem to be an obvious and necessary inference, that he could not be the omniscient God. To instance a few of these. In the 5th chapter of St. John's Gospel, and the 30th verse, we find these words ascribed to our Lord, "I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just: because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father who hath sent me." In the 7th chapter of the same evangelist, the 14th and following verses, we read that "about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled saying, how knoweth this man letters having never learned? Jesus answered them and said, my doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him." In the 8th chapter, the 28th and 29th verses, we find our Lord thus addressing the Jews — "Then said Jesus unto them, when ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me; The Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him." And afterwards, at the 40th verse, "But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God." In the 12th chapter, the 49th and 50th verses, we find our Lord expressing himself in the same manner, "I have not spoken

of myself," says he, "but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting; whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." And once more, in the beautiful and solemn prayer, which we find recorded in the 17th chapter of the same gospel, he thus addresses that Being from whom he always professed that all his knowledge and his power were derived,—"Now," says he, speaking of his chosen followers, "now they have known that all things, whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me."

These passages, and others that might be produced of similar import, will appear, I cannot help thinking, to the candid and unprejudiced mind, perfectly irreconcilable with the doctrine of the omniscience and deity of Jesus Christ. I am not ignorant of the answer that will be returned. It will be said, I know, that the Son, though equal in nature and essence, assumed a character, and acted a part, as it were, in the economy of redemption, inferior to the Father; and that it is in this view only that he is said to be taught, instructed, commanded, sent by him. To all this it may be sufficient to reply, referring you with confidence to the New Testament for the best and most satisfactory proofs of the justice of this opinion, that such an interpretation has no foundation whatsoever in the testimony of Scripture. I cannot, indeed, for my own part, regard it in any other light

than as a mere hypothesis, "the work of men's hands," framed to solve a fancied difficulty. The dramatic fiction thus supposed, the assumption of separate characters by the three parts or forms, persons or subsistences of the Godhead, appears to me, — and I would say it with all due respect for the many excellent persons who hold an opinion directly opposite, doubtless on grounds which they deem satisfactory, — not only contradictory to the unity, but inconsistent with the truth, unworthy of the dignity and wisdom, and altogether unsupported by the word of God.

In the Scriptures, I think, we may look in vain, even for the rudiments, for the bare outline of that *scheme* or *economy* which is so distinctly laid down, and so minutely described, in all its parts, by every modern champion of what is generally termed orthodoxy. We find nothing there, no, not a single text, as far as I can see, which speaks of an eternal threefold distinction in the essence of Deity; of the arrangement of an economy of redemption, agreed upon before all worlds, between the three distinct, yet substantially identical persons, alike infinite and divine, of the one infinite Godhead; of the necessity of an infinite sacrifice, in the person of one of these, in order to atone for the sins of a finite and created being, against the infinite Triune Creator; of the consequent voluntary condescension of the second divine person, and his perfect union with a perfect man, in order to provide such a sacrifice. These doctrines, it is true, how mysterious soever we may deem them, and whatever contradictions they may appear to us to involve, we can nevertheless see distinctly laid down in almost every Tri-

nitarian work, in commentaries, and sermons, and polemical tracts, in the writings of men, whose sincerity we cannot doubt, whose ingenuity and eloquence we may admire, and whose piety and virtue we must love and respect; but we cannot see them — for myself, I declare it seriously and deliberately, that I cannot perceive even a trace of them — where only we ought to be convinced by seeing them, *in the Scriptures.* To me, therefore, and to all who think with me, they cannot serve, in the least degree, to explain or modify those clear, direct, and unambiguous passages, in which Jesus is spoken of, and speaks of himself, as an inferior being, instructed, commanded, sent by the Supreme.

I observe, in the second place, and upon similar grounds, that prayer is an act which it is impossible to suppose could be performed by a being, himself omniscient, himself God. We find our blessed Master frequently, nay, constantly engaged in earnest prayer to his heavenly Father; using the same language, and assuming the same devout and lowly attitude, as our feeble species; bowing down his body, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, while he calls upon the Most High; indicating, in short, by every outward sign, that he regarded the object of his worship not only as distinct from himself, but infinitely superior. Is it possible for us to imagine, when we see him thus engaged, thus prostrate, that he was nevertheless the Supreme omniscient God? If we could think so, must we not suppose that his prayers too, as well as his expressions of inferiority and dependence, are to be explained by the intervention of the gratuitous hypothesis before alluded to! that he is to be regarded as praying

not from himself, as the Son of God, but merely in his "official capacity," as our Saviour and exampler? But is not such a supposition as derogatory from that character of infinite truth which we ascribe to our heavenly Father, as it is without warrant from his word?

Surely if Jehovah were to descend on earth, and bear a human form, with awe and reverence be it spoken, we should discover, in every action and gesture, the matchless dignity of him who has no equal, "the port of that Eternal Majesty that weighed the world's foundations." He might meditate, in secret, on his own perfections; he might review those wondrous thoughts of love and mercy, which, stretching through the vast infinities of space and time, sustain and bless all worlds; but he could not bow down his head like a creature; he could not pray like one of those frail, finite, and dependent beings, to whom "time and chance happen," and by whom their issues are unknown.

The very act of prayer necessarily implies, in him that prays, an acknowledged limitation both of knowledge and of power. When our Lord offers up the earnest petition, that "if it be possible the cup may pass from him,"* we must either conclude that he speaks the language of fiction, assuming a character lower than his own, *praying in character!* or we must relinquish altogether our belief in his omniscience. "*If it be possible*" — is not the language of him by whom all future as all past events are known, both in their causes and their consequences. As a finite being, our blessed Lord might think it possible, in the hour of bitter anguish, that He

* Matt. xxvi, 39.

who spared the son of Abraham, and "provided himself" another burnt-offering, in the place of that more precious one which he had first required, He to whom "all things are possible,"* might listen to his earnest but humble prayer; accept the resigned spirit and the patient will to suffer, for the deed; and remove the bitter cup, from the perfect knowledge that, if offered, it would be drained to the very dregs. Such might have been the transient thought, the momentary hope, of a being of finite nature and imperfect knowledge; but no such hope or thought could have dwelt, even for a moment, in the breast of Omniscience, to whom the future must have appeared as irrevocably fixed and certain as the past. The prayers of Jesus, then, appear to me to afford a proof, as convincing as the most direct assurances could do, that he neither was, nor desired to be thought, omniscient.

But thirdly, our Lord, we are told, "was tempted in all points like as we are, and yet without sin." Does not temptation, I would ask, necessarily imply the limited knowledge of the person tempted? To an omniscient mind, at every moment perfectly informed of the precise nature and properties of every object, of the exact tenor and final issue of every event, all partial views of interest and pleasure, all doubt and indecision as to the true grounds of preference, and therefore, in my mind, all temptation must be absolutely impossible. Temptation evidently implies the existence of some fancied ground of desire for that which is really and truly undesirable, at the very least a momentary attraction to the wrong, a suspension of mind, however transient, between an appa-

* Mark xiv, 33.

rent and a real, a finite and an infinite good. But to an omniscient being this can never be, since to him real and apparent must be the same, and finite must appear to be lost in infinite. By his mind every thing must be seen in its true light, evil as evil, good as good. The future, to him, is the present. The remotest consequences of actions stand, in his view, immediately connected with their sources. In him, therefore, to will or to desire wrongly, would be an infinite folly, which to ascribe to him would be infinitely absurd. "God cannot be tempted of evil," and consequently he cannot resist temptation. How then could he be God, who was tempted at all points as we are, and to whose praise it is recorded, that though tempted, he was yet without sin.

Not to be tempted, is a glory peculiar to the Creator. To be tempted, and to resist, is the glory of the creature; and even this he may exchange for a yet higher one, the glory of being tempted no longer by that which tempted him before. In proportion as the joys of eternity are realized, by frequent devout contemplation, to the good man's mind, he looks on those of time "with undesiring eyes." In what degree soever this is the case, his contest is ended, his struggle is over, he is no longer tempted, he has risen above temptation. Could we suppose it completely so; could we suppose God in all his glories, and eternity with all its awful realities, actually revealed and perfectly realized to his conception; could we, in other words, suppose him *omniscient;* then indeed for him there would be no temptation; time, in his view, would have passed into eternity; God would be seen in all things, and all in God.

But Jesus was *tempted*, though, supported by God, he did not yield; he heard the invitation at least, though with virtue superior to all the children of men, he turned not aside one single step from his way; he contended for a little, though he was speedily victorious. The conclusion, in my mind, is irresistible, that Jesus was not omniscient. Omniscience could not have been tempted; omniscience could have seen no enemy, could have fought no battle, and could, therefore, have gained no victory.

"If thou be the son of God," said the tempter, "command that these stones be made bread." The man of sorrows, who had not where to lay his head, the partaker of all our wants and woes, might, as such, have been tempted for a moment to employ his miraculous powers in ministering to his own necessities. In him it might have been virtue, high and exalted virtue, feeling that he could have acted otherwise, to pursue his rugged path regardless of himself, to refuse to convert the stones that strewed it into the means of sustenance and comfort, to choose rather to live upon the words that proceeded from his Father's mouth, and to regard the performance of his Father's work, and the completion of his will, in the most distressing circumstances of privation and pain, as meat and drink sufficient for him. To one who was "in all things made like unto his brethren," the temptation might have been great; but what could it have been to one who felt himself essentially united with the very source of life; who was living, as it were, at the same moment, in the past, the present, and the future; who was feeding on those thoughts that must give to all other food the power to nourish and sustain; who was

actually, not figuratively, one with that great First Cause, in whom all creatures live, and move, and have their being? Is it possible to suppose that the human nature, thus pervaded and supported by the divine, not to say identified with it, could yet feel our wants, and even entertain the passing thought of supplying them in a manner inconsistent with perfect rectitude of will?

"If thou be the Son of God," said the tempter, a second time, to Jesus, as he stood on the pinnacle of the temple, "cast thyself down; for it is written he shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." To one entrusted with powers from above, the thought might perhaps have occurred of making a needless, but magnificent display of them, and illustrating the extent of his authority by a use of it, calculated rather to attract attention and confer honour upon himself, than to accomplish the great object for which it was bestowed. Such a one might perhaps have felt a momentary desire to grant the astonished multitudes that sign from heaven which they afterwards so frequently requested; and by the same power which could heal the sick, and raise the dead, and work hourly miracles of love and mercy, to descend though the air, upborne by angels, from the highest pinnacle of the temple. In a mere finite being it might have been virtue to resist the thought that would have prompted a vain and needless display, to suppress every movement of self-love, every rising desire of personal distinction and public applause, and to cherish that unaffected modesty and lowliness of spirit, which always led our Lord and

Master to prefer usefulness to fame, and his Father's glory to his own; teaching him, even when he *was* to triumph, to choose the meek and lowly triumph of humility, still to decline the wings of angels, and to select for his solemn entrance into the holy city, the humble conveyance of the young ass's colt. But where, let me ask, would have been the temptation, and where consequently, the conquest over it, to an infinite and omniscient being? Is it creditable that such a being could have felt the slightest inducement, either from motives of self-aggrandizement or self-preservation, to employ his boundless powers in any other than the wisest and the fittest way? Could he, who was in closest union with the Godhead, who was God, have ever wished for any greater safety, or sought for any brighter glory, than a single glance upon himself must have proved to be essentially his own?

The promise of temporal power, even of all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, was the third temptation. To a finite creature, that promise might, doubtless, have appeared great and dazzling. But such, alas! the favour of God, and the happiness of heaven, are often sacrificed for a much smaller price. But what could it have been to Him whose eye had traversed the infinite of space; who, from the height of his own mind, infinitely higher than that mountain summit to which the tempter ignorantly carried him, had beheld, not all the kingdoms of the world, but all the worlds of the universe, and the glories of them; before whom they stood revealed at the very moment; and who felt himself in essential union with their infinite possessor? Surely no finite temporal authority, if we could suppose such an

offer made to him who was already Lord of all, could have been the slightest temptation to omniscience and omnipotence combined. From his lips there might have been eternal truth, but there could not have been human virtue in the answer, "Get thee hence, thou adversary, for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." But Jesus we are told, was "tempted in all points *like as we are*." This alone, seems to me, to prove, beyond all doubt, that Jesus was not omniscient.

I observe, in the last place, and I shall merely observe, that all those passages of scripture, which imply the limitation of any other of the attributes of Jesus, will also imply that of his knowledge. He who was not infinite in *all*, could not have been so in *any*. Thus all the evidence which the scriptures contain, of the undivided personal unity of the Godhead, of the inferiority of the Son to the Father, all the evidence, in short, that Unitarianism is the doctrine of the gospel, will bear upon the point now under consideration. Our text, we have endeavored to show, clearly inculcates that important and leading doctrine of the gospel, for which, as Unitarians, with sincerity and earnestness, yet with meekness and charity, we think it our duty to contend.

What remains, then, christian friends, but that you be exhorted not to receive, without examination, my opinions, or those of any other man, or body of men, but like the noble Bereans, "to search the scriptures daily, whether these things be so." It is possible that I, and those who think with me, notwithstanding our firm conviction to the contrary, may yet be wrong, if not on all

points, at least on some. To the credit of sincerity we lay strong claim, a claim which we think that no one has a right to question without proof; but to infallibility we make no pretension. We do not therefore refuse, but, on the contrary, invite the most impartial and rigid scrutiny into our opinions, and the grounds of them. If you think that we are wrong, we only say, prove that we are so, and we shall be happy to relinquish our errors; nor will any false shame, we trust, forbid us to acknowledge them frankly, and to thank you cordially for having pointed them out.

Be it always ours, brethren, to seek the truth with diligence, to hold it fast, when found, with modest firmness, to profess it with charity, and to defend it with meekness. Finally, let us implore the Father of lights, and the Giver of wisdom, to guide and assist our inquiries, and above all, to direct and sanctify them to their only valuable end, the attainment of a more fervent piety, a more extensive benevolence, a deeper humility, a stricter self-government; in one word, a daily growing conformity to the pure and perfect example of that beloved Son of God, in whom we recognise, revere, and love the brightest resemblance, the express moral image of the Father.

Let not our trinitarian brethren be surprised; these are my words; I say *revere and love*. We trust that we do *revere* the Lord Jesus, as the appointed head over all things to his church, our Lord and Master and our future judge. We trust that we can truly say, in the words of the apostle, "Him, having not seen, we *love*." Dear to our hearts, assuredly most dear, if we are what

we profess ourselves, is that good Shepherd, who laid down his life for his sheep. We, with our fellow christians, delight to cherish his remembrance; we pray that nothing may have power to separate us from his love; our warmest hope is, that we may be found worthy to be with him where he is, and to behold his glory; we look and long for his salvation; we implore every spiritual blessing through his name; and through him, the beloved Son of the Father, we ascribe to God, only wise and good, most high, most holy, and most merciful, supreme over all, even to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, everlasting praises.

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ON

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ON

RELIGIOUS PHRASEOLOGY.

CONSISTING OF

AN EXPLANATION OF SOME OF THE MOST COMMON TERMS AND PHRASES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, TOGETHER WITH SOME REMARKS ON THE POPULAR AND TECHNICAL RELIGIOUS PHRASEOLOGY OF THE PRESENT DAY.

It is not intended to give an air of paradox, to what is believed to be a sober truth, when we say, that there is no book so much read, and so little understood as the Bible. And we may add, that there is no subject—no abstract subject, at least, so much thought of, and *as an abstract subject*, so little comprehended, as religion. It is as certain, as it is unfortunate, that on the principles of religion, there are more vague terms and vague ideas abroad in the world, than on any other.

This deficiency of clear views, about the terms and ideas that belong to religion, might be made obvious in many ways. Let any one after he has conversed on religious topics, or after praying, let him pause, and recall the expressions he has used, and endeavour to attach a precise meaning to them, and he will find it to be far more difficult than at first he may be ready to imagine

Or, let any one read a chapter in the New Testament, (and he may take the simplest part of it)—let him undertake to affix a definite sense to every phrase and word he meets with, and he will probably be surprised at the difficulty of the process. Or if you attend to the thoughts of other men, you may find the same deficiency. You may put to silence almost any fluent talker upon religion, by the simple question, "*understandest* thou what thou sayest?" And it is a question too, which may often disturb the most discriminating in their views, and the most guarded in their language. Indeed, the hardest question, in all moral and religious speculations is, "what do you mean?" and had it been sufficiently attended to, would have put an end to a thousand other questions.

This vagueness in the ideas of men is also perfectly manifest from the endless disputes that have prevailed among them. How many huge volumes of controversial theology would have been reduced to a few scanty sheets, if men had understood either their antagonists or themselves.

Besides, it is to be observed that the *imperfection* of our moral and religious notions consists essentially in the vagueness of our conceptions. The deficiency is not a want of ideas, but a want of discrimination concerning them. The elements of moral science and of religious truth, are, either, within ourselves, or in the record which God has given us of them. This truth—this science, is founded on human nature and on divine revelation. Of the feelings of our nature we are *conscious*;—and what is needed is only to distinguish them. In other words, the elements of moral science are not to be yet created, but to be reduced to order, and illuminated by clearer per-

ceptions. And of religious truths, there is nothing new to be revealed, but what is already communicated is to be better understood.

From the *evidences* we might pass to the *cause* of this obscurity in our notions of religion. One without doubt, is to be found in the nature of the subject,—it being spiritual, abstract, and removed from our ordinary and sensible apprehensions of things. Another cause, however, and still greater, exists in our indifference to the subject. Men are not troubled with vague ideas about commerce, politics, &c.; and it needs but the same intense interest to give them far more clear and impressive ideas of religion also.

But there is, yet, another cause of this obscurity, which has suggested to me the leading object of this Essay. It is found in the circumstance, that much of our religious phraseology, is drawn from an ancient book,—from writings characterized by a style so different from our ordinary modes of expression, that the adoption of it in common discourse woud appear extremely singular and inappropriate; from writings, tco, marked by circumstances, customs, and habits of thought, which have long since passed away, and which are now, either unknown or disregarded. This antiquated style of the sacred scriptures, has also conspired with other causes, to produce in many minds the feeling that religion is itself, something strange, unintelligible, mystical, and above all, and worse than all, that it is something to be kept quite distinct and separate from the ordinary courses of thought and the ordinary conduct of life. The style of the New Testament does not more differ from our

common modes of expression, than religion, the subject of the New Testament, is apprehended to differ, or to be distinct from the ordinary actions of life.

What is proposod in this tract, therefore, is to enter a little more particularly than we are accustomed to do perhaps, into the meaning of some of the most common terms and expressions, by which, in the New Testament, religion and the subjects of religion are described; and after that, to review some of those religious terms and phrases, which are in the most frequent use at the present day. Concerning many of these expressions of both kinds, and especially those of scripture, there may be not a few individuals of whom the inquiry, once addressed to the Ethiopian nobleman, might be properly made: "*Understandest thou what thou readest?*" This question was, indeed, addressed to a Pagan, who had been in his early life, ignorant of the Scriptures,—but it is possible that our very familiarity with them, may have rendered us dull of apprehension; or may have made us less attentive to the particular meaning and force of what we read. And all this will be so much the worse, as it comes under the guise of knowledge. If we were reading for the first time, we might ask, with the Ethiopian, for some man to guide us, but we have read often, and long,—we have read till we imagine there is nothing more to learn.

I shall endeavour to range the SCRIPTURAL PHRASES to be noticed, under several heads; such as, principally, the following, viz.; the appellations given to our religion; the good or benefit which it was designed to communicate; the way in which this benefit is to be obtained, and the method of God's bestowing it.

1. First, *the appellations given to Christianity.* These are such as covenant, testament, kingdom of God, mystery.

Covenant and *Testament* are a translation of the same word, which signified originally to *arrange;* and God's dealings with men, have, in the scriptures, taken a form, or arrangement, or agreement. There is something fixed and established; a plan by which God promises certain blessings on certain conditions. This is God's covenant. The word which signified an arrangement or disposition of things, came very naturally to apply to a testament, and was commonly so used by the classical Greek writers. As the word testament indicates an arrangement, to take place after the death of him who makes it, it is with additional propriety applied to christianity, because it was left as a plan or direction, to be executed after the death of its founder. A testament cannot be published nor take effect till the death of the testator; and christianity could not be proclaimed nor established, till it was confirmed by the patient and meritorious suffering and the triumphant resurrection of its great teacher. "For a testament is of force after men are dead." Thus we hear of the "blood of the covenant" or testament; and our Saviour says to his disciples, "this cup is the new testament in my blood;" that is, this cup represents my blood; in other words, my death, by which my religion is sealed, my work is consummated; my directions take the character of a testament, and are ready to be executed.

The phrase *kingdom of God,* conveys to many minds, I believe, the idea of some outward establishment or form; or at least, of some cause or object that is extraneous to piety itself. But, says our Saviour, the kingdom of heaven is *within* you; and Paul teaches us that the

kingdom of God consisteth not in meats and drinks,—that is, not in outward services and ceremonial offerings, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. In other words, the kingdom of God is the prevalence of goodness. In the mind that is imbued with religion, God reigns; it is subject to his will. Christianity in its holy influences on the heart, is very naturally denominated the kingdom or reign of God.

The christian religion is also called a *mystery;* and by common, though it must be allowed, careless readers, this word is understood to import something which is incomprehensible. I say, careless readers, for out of the twenty seven times in which this word is used in the New Testament, it evidently means, in every instance but one, and that doubtful, not something unintelligible, but something revealed. The case excepted is in the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians, "for though I understand all mysteries;" where it is probable enough, as the supposition gives intensity to the comparison, which the Apostle uses, that the word mystery means something beyond the reach of human powers to comprehend. In two instances, only, it relates to something future, which was already revealed, but which might be considered as in some obscurity, since it was yet to be accomplished. The principle of these is in the 2nd Epistle to the Thessalonians; where Paul is speaking of the great anti-christian apostacy, which had already begun to manifest itself. And he does it in these terms; "and now we know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth, (that is, hindereth,) will let until he be taken out of the way; then shall that wicked be revealed," &c. In two

instances only, the word mystery means something obscurely revealed—shadowed forth, by allegory and metaphor. These are the mystery of the seven stars in Revelation;—that is, what was illustrated or represented by the seven stars; and the passage in Ephesians, where Paul says, "this is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church." The connexion between our Lord and his followers he had illustrated from our natural affections; and as they did but illustrate it,—as they failed fully to exhibit it, he still calls it a mystery. There is one passage indeed, (the 14th of the 1st Cor.) where the word relates to things not understood;—not however because they were unintelligible, but because they were spoken in an unknown tongue. In all other instances, mystery in the New Testament is something, not obscurely shadowed forth, much less, unintelligible, but clearly manifested; as in the following language, "the mystery which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now *revealed*," &c.:—"to us it is given to *know* the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven:" "I would not that ye should be ignorant of this mystery:" and again in a passage commonly thought to be a striking declaration of the mysteriousness of the Gospel: "great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest,"—or as it should be rendered, by the correction of better manuscripts—"he who was manifest in the flesh was justified in the spirit, seen of angels," &c.—where the mystery is something manifest, and declared, not unintelligible.

I have not gone through this examination for the sake of showing that there are no mysteries in religion. On the contrary there are mysteries in every thing. But it would be very strange, indeed, if they should especially

denominate and characterize a system, which was expressly given us as a *revelation.*

2. We pass now, in the second place, from the appellations given to Christianity, *to the good or benefit*, which it was principally designed to communicate. This is commonly signified, by the phrase being *saved. Salvation* is the great benefit offered in the Gospel. These words,—save—saved—salvation—are used in nearly two hundred instances in the New Testament, and the radical idea conveyed by them, is, that of a rescue or preservation from some evil. When applied to the mind or to the influence of the gospel, or as they commonly are, a liberation from spiritual evils, is intended;—that is, of course, from sin, chiefly, and from the evils that necessarily flow from it. In other words, to be saved, is to make holy,—and happy in consequence. Salvation *is* purity of heart;—it is virtue and piety. This is the intrinsic benefit which the word expresses. Other ideas may be connected with it; other things may flow from it—escape from misery—the attainment of happiness;—but the salvation offered in the Scriptures is in itself and essentially that holiness which they inculcate. The gospel is declared to be the power of God unto salvation; that is, to the formation of right, of religious dispositions. Indeed, what else is of any great interest to us besides virtue. Do you say, happiness? But we cannot be happy without virtue. Do you say, forgiveness? But what to our ingenuous thoughts is forgiveness, if God still abhors us? Is escape from misery the great salvation? Still we say, this cannot be found, but in virtue, unless it is found in annihilation.

If this idea of salvation, as being essentially rectitude of mind, had been sufficiently considered, we should have had no laborious disquisitions on such questions as these—whether men could be saved without piety? how much piety was requisite for salvation? what parts or exercises of religion were most likely to insure it? &c. We should never have heard of the question, whether men could be saved by the mere mercy of God, without any goodness of their own. Nor could men have ever trusted to one act of repentance in their last moments, nor have relied on extreme unction to save them, which they might as well do; nor would men ever have felt as if they were unreasonably or unkindly threatened, for neglecting their salvation, for they would have seen that it was neglecting their truest interest and happiness,—and of the danger of this, they can bear to be warned,—and of this, they could never have been otherwise than affectionately warned. The truth is, a man is saved but in proportion as he is sanctified. This salvation, I repeat it, *consists* in being made good and holy. This is the way *of life;* another term, that expresses the perfection and happiness of a religious character; this is the plain and unambiguous way, in which the wayfaring, though fools, need not err, the highway over which the unclean do not pass. And if this obvious and simple view of the subject had made its proper impression, the world would not have been perplexed with needless controversies about the nature and efficacy of faith, about imputed righteousness, &c. Only call faith and righteousness what they are, and what all the requisitions of the Bible are—goodness—and nothing would be plainer, than the way of

salvation. No one could ever think of asking why goodness saves us, for all know that it is the perfection, and glory, and happiness of our nature. And to talk about the imputation of these personal qualities of the heart, would seem as absurd as to talk about an imputation of the sensations and pains of a fever.

Concerning this internal character, however, which, together with the happiness flowing from it, embraces all that is positively meant by salvation, there are a great variety of phrases used in the New Testament, on which however we can dwell but for a moment.

There is the *commencement* of the christian life, denoted by the phrases, "born again, created anew," &c. These phrases implied two things. They implied a conversion from one religion to another. All proselytes to the Jewish religion, without any regard to their motives or intentions, were said to be born again; they were called new born children. The same phrases went into a similar use among Christians. But in the mouths of the Christian Teachers, these phrases undoubtedly meant also, a renovation of heart; not a mere speculative or ostensible conversion. Still, however, this ostensible event,—this proselytism, which could be dated from a given day or hour, has given form and coloring to the language in question, rather, than that series of events, (if I may so call them,) which it also indicated—rather than the slow process of spiritual renovation. Yet on this language, thus modified by circumstances that have long since past by, has been founded the doctrine of sudden conversions,—of an instantaneous change,—of a single act of experience, in a moment, qualifying the

vilest for the purity of heaven. And multitudes have put themselves to unspeakable distress; have passed gloomy days and sleepless nights, not so much because they were deficient in piety (for if this were the occasion of distress, it might well continue for years,) as because they could not attain a certain strange and extravagant state of mind called conversion. The celebrated Whitfield's idea of conversion was much better, who prayed that he might be converted a thousand times every day. Of such conversion we cannot desire too much.

Again, there are *figurative descriptions* of piety; as a path,—a race,—a warfare; by which we are to understand, of course,—the progress,—and endeavour,—and conflict,—of religious principle.

3. Let us now consider, as a third topic of inquiry, *the way of obtaining this good or benefit*,—regarded in the first place as piety itself and that alone.

On this subject two classes of texts will demand attention; the one requiring exertion on our part; the other offering divine aid, and teaching our dependence on it. They are exhibited in the following language; "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." These representations have been the subject of endless dispute and cavilling, which have thrown innumerable obstacles in the way of a religious life. The difficulty has been that men could not take the plain and credit the mysterious,—could not be content with what they knew and submit to what they did not. The first of the above representations they would not use as practical, because they could not understand the second con-

sidered as speculative; or the second they would so understand, as to destroy the obvious and practical character of the first. They would do nothing to save themselves, because it was the work of God; or the fancied consciousness of certain divine impulses has rendered them less diligent and careful about the obvious duty of working out their own salvation. This latter notion of divine impulse has been the source of almost all the christian fanaticism that has been in the world. For every wild fanatic has been a pretender to divine illumination.—he has, if you will believe him, been taught of God,—he has a warrant for what he believes and feels,—he *knows* that he is right.

But what *are* we to understand from these representations, which point out the mode of obtaining a religious character? the one directing us to our own exertions, the other to divine assistance? It may be answered, then, that we should interpret the doubtful by the certain, that which we do not know, by that which we do. The first of the above directions is perfectly obvious. We know what it is to strive, and labour, and pray, for purity of mind. And all Scripture unites to assure us that without such endeavours, we cannot attain the character which is implied in salvation. We know the *mode* of human exertion; but we do *not* know the method of the divine operation. We know that in human exertion is implied freedom, activity, effort, the proper influence of motives It is certain, therefore, if we are to explain what we do not know, by what we do, that divine influence does not infringe on human liberty or accountableness. We are also explicitly *taught* that the promise of God's assistance,

so far from being a hindrance is a motive and encouragement to our own exertions, "work out your own salvation, *for* it is God that worketh in you." Here, then, is a safeguard from all vain and indolent reliance on the aid of heaven.

And yet, on the other hand, we are to seek the aid of heaven. It is offered to us. Its importance is insisted on in the sacred scriptures. To reject because we cannot understand it, is taking a course which nothing short of omniscience could justify. To deny that God works within us because we ourselves work, is as much as to assert for all active beings an absolute independence on God; is to exclude him from the noblest part of his creation; and is about as wise as to assert, that, since the system of the universe moves, it is certain that God does not move it. In fine, to deny his agency on the mind because the doctrine leads to fanaticism, is to make it liable for all the perversions and abuses which men have heaped upon it. The doctrine is not, that the influence of God is perceptible, and sensible, an impulse or a suggestion, of which the mind is conscious, and which is distinguishable from its own emotions. It is the reverse of all this. It is an influence, which we do not attempt to characterize, or explain, or, strictly speaking, to feel. That is, the mind does not directly perceive it. It cannot say, "this or that thought or affection is from God." It is, and from its very nature can be conscious of nothing but what it feels. This, if it be considered, will be seen to strike a fatal blow at all fanaticism. A man's peculiar impressions, his conviction, his assurance, is still but the working of his own mind. It is all to be brought to the

test of Scripture and common sense. And there never was a fanaticism which could bear such a test—which could resist the influence of such a comparison.

It has been already remarked that the blessing, which it was the great design of Christianity to confer, is represented not merely to be piety, but, also, the results of piety,—happiness, the divine favour, &c. It is under this *last* character that we may consider *the way of obtaining this blessing*. What are the means of obtaining happiness? What are the conditions of gaining the favour of God—that is, his approbation and his forgiveness? Now, whether we consult our own reason, or the word of God, we cannot hesitate one moment about the answer. Through all time, through all the forms and changes of being, through all the regions of existence, the one, immutable, eternal condition of happiness and the divine favour, is rectitude. In proportion as any creature possesses this, he will be happy; in such proportion God will approve him—will forgive him,—and in no other proportion. He cannot be perfectly approved, he cannot be perfectly forgiven, till he is perfectly holy. Till then, he cannot be completely happy; and how then is he fully forgiven the penalty due to sin, if he is yet suffering the misery of sin itself? Such is the uniform language of reason, of nature, of scripture. And thus we find, that, in our sacred writings, *every* christian virtue and excellence is, at one time or another, enumerated as the condition of salvation; the indispensable condition; for how can any one be happy, or be an object of the divine approbation, without them?

The subject, in this view of it, appears to be extreme-

ly plain; and yet there is often a mystery affected about this matter, as if it were some portentous secret. "The way of salvation," as it is commonly called, is often represented as a matter, about which men are, to the last degree, liable to err. Sermon after sermon is preached, not simply about a virtuous and holy life, which is THE WAY to salvation, through the mercy of God, but about the question what the way is, and the danger of mistaking it; of mistaking, that is to say, not the *nature* of true virtue and piety,—for here there *is* danger; but of mistaking the very terms and conditions of salvation. The subject is brought forward again and again in the pulpit, and is, in fact, one of the most popular that the preacher can adopt. He labours hard with statements, and reasonings, and explications. He raises up opponents, and beats them down, and shows himself to be a Hercules in argument. And what, I pray, is all this ado about? About the simple question, how a man shall obtain the approbation and forgiveness of God! About the simple question, how a man shall be happy in his own mind and conscience, and in communion with his Maker! But what *are* these mistakes to which men are so liable? It is said, that some expect to be saved by their own merits, that they expect heaven as the reward of their own deserts. Monstrous, and incredible supposition! Where is the man that can lift up his face even before his fellow beings, and say, that his virtues or his deeds deserve an eternal and infinite recompense? Again, it is said that others rely upon an inadequate provision, upon a Saviour who is a creature like themselves. They rely on the mercy of God, fully revealed and freely offered in the gospel, and testified in the instructions, and sealed in

the blood of Jesus Christ. Will any one dare to say that this is an insufficient reliance? But let us dwell on this view of the subject for a moment. The mysterious and difficult point of doctrine, of which so much is made, is, that men are to be saved *through Christ crucified.* The whole stress of instruction is upon this point, and yet it is a point seldom or never explained, in the popular teaching, so as to be perfectly clear and obvious. While, at the same time, it is the simplest of all directions. "Repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," was the language of the apostles to the ancient inquirers after salvation. Now, repentance is well understood to be a virtue extremely plain and practical; and not less plain and practical is faith. It is receiving Jesus Christ as a Teacher, Example, and Saviour, a Restorer, i. e. from the bondage and curse of sin. It is a believing in him, "with all the heart," and therefore an obeying of his precepts. In short, this virtue, so far as it is saving, is altogether practical. And the way of salvation is evidently nothing else but the way of repentance, and religious trust, and all goodness. It is a matter, in which "the way-faring though fools need not err." No man can have any more rational doubt about it, than about the course of the sun in heaven. Every time we think, or talk, or preach about any of the virtues of Christianity, the sentiments of piety, the duties of life, we are thinking, and talking, and preaching about this way. And the chief occasion of solicitude is, not that men should not know where it is, but that they should enter into and abide in it.

There are two questions however, plain as the subject

may thus seem to be, which require some attention. Why, if we are saved by our own virtues—through the merciful influence and interposition of God,—why are we said to be saved by grace, and not by works? And why, if rectitude, if purity of mind, does in the highest sense constitute our salvation, if we are saved but in proportion as we are sanctified, if sanctification, if holiness *is* our salvation, why has *faith* such a pre-eminence in this concern? We might be apt to think, that *obeying* had a better title to this distinction than believing.

With regard to the first of these questions,—why are we said to be saved by grace, and not by works?—every difficulty is removed if we consider that the apostles, when they say this, are speaking not of means but of merits,—not of what we must do to be saved, but of the question whether we can *deserve* to be saved. And on this point they are very explicit and earnest. On the ground of justice they maintain that we cannot be saved; that we cannot claim happiness as strictly due to our obedience; that we are to rely, so far as merit is concerned, on the mercy of God. "It is not of works," says Paul, "lest any man should boast." And yet so far as the *means* of happiness or salvation are concerned, we are none the less to rely on our own character, in an humble dependence on the aid and mercy of God.

There is really no disagreement in these ideas. Happiness is the result of virtue. God has made it so. We speak but the language of his will, therefore, when we say that virtue must save us; or in other words, that rectitude, goodness, purity, or holiness must save us. But present virtue or holiness cannot atone for past transgres-

sion, nor claim the future happiness of heaven. If strict justice takes place, we must still suffer. We deserve to suffer, even the best and holiest. But God deals with us in measures more lenient; which are just indeed, but also go beyond mere justice, and are merciful. He rewards our virtues with happiness; but he more than rewards; more, because he imparts more happiness than our virtues deserve, and more, too, because he forgives our past offences.

In the next place, we have to notice the singular importance that is assigned to faith, as a means of salvation—an importance, which has led many, as they could see no other reason for it, to ascribe to this virtue some mysterious efficacy. Hence many books have been written to set forth its mystical and marvellous qualities, ascribing to faith an efficacy entirely distinct from religious character, and altogether superior to it, boasting of its triumph over that tame and common-place way of gaining happiness and the favour of God, namely, by being virtuous and good; attributing to it, the power of making that true, when believed, which was not true before, and could not have been true otherwise;—books, indeed, which their readers must needs consider as treating of deep mysteries, since that only could save them from the charge of setting forth more profound absurdities.

It is to be observed in this connexion, that the language of scripture has been greatly misunderstood. In many instances where it is said, that we are justified, not by the works of the law, but by faith, the works of the *ceremonial* law are meant; and the amount of the

declaration is, that we are saved, not by ceremonial offerings, but by an inward and spiritual virtue. This virtue is most frequently denominated faith. And the question we have to answer is—why has *faith* this pre-eminence? Is it intrinsically better than the other christian graces, that it has this dignity? Is it better than love, or forgiveness? Is it better than obedience? Rather, is it not essentially the same thing? No attentive reader of the New Testament can doubt that it is. Faith is virtue. It has no merit nor efficacy, but as it is, or as it creates a right disposition. Its excellence is the excellence of every virtue. It has no intrinsic superiority over other parts of the christian character.

Its distinction, therefore, must be owing to something external to itself—to circumstances. And these are exceedingly obvious. There was a new religion proposed, and the first and natural requisition would be, for faith in it. And, again, the avowal of such faith, at the expense of danger, injury, and ignominy, was a decisive indication of sincere piety. To ascertain whether a man were a real christian, in that day, it was enough to ask, is he a believer? Hence faith came to be the comprehensive and common term for piety, and the leading condition of acceptance with God.

4. But we must attend in the fourth place, and finally, *to the method in which God bestows his favour.* This is commonly designated by the terms, *forgiveness* and *justification.*

What first strikes us is, the apparent inconsistency between these terms. If forgiveness is the method of God's accepting us, how can it be justification? How

can men be justified in sin, or being sinful as they are, how can they be justified at all? The answer is,—no how. The term is used not in a literal, but in a figurative sense. Justification is being *treated as if* we were just;—at least, in one respect,—in being freed from the just consequences of sin; not, perhaps, from all its consequences, but from what it properly deserves. Justification, therefore, is the same as forgiveness.

With regard to forgiveness, however, I imagine, we are apt to conceive of it, as some distinct act or declaration of the Almighty, made at some definite period, and pledged to the penitent for all future time. But it is rather to be regarded as a disposition in God. It is not an artificial, arbitrary, absolute decree of immunity from all the evils that follow transgression. But it is a disposition to deal mercifully with us. It forgives us not all at once, but in proportion to our amendment. It can do no more. It cannot approve of sin, nor make it the source of happiness. It is not capricious nor fond; but wise and holy. It reproves, while it encourages; it warns, while it pardons us.

There is another term, sometimes used to express the divine method of acceptance, which it is very important to the sense of some passages to understand. It is righteousness; and is particularly used for the purpose now specified in some of the early chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. It means God's gratuitous method of justification; and like the term justification, is used in a figurative sense, meaning not literal righteousness, nor making man actually righteous, but treating them, as if they were so—that is, bestowing favour

and kindness upon them. That this favour is granted, or that pardon is bestowed, *through the righteousness of Christ*, is a favourite phrase with many, and thought to be very material to a right and full exhibition of the method in which God bestows the blessings of the gospel. The phrase, *righteousness of Christ*, however, does not occur in the New Testament; still less are we said to be *forgiven* through his righteousness. Not indeed that, with our views, it would give us any concern if it were a phrase of Scripture—for we are undoubtedly said to receive righteousness from Christ; and we do so, literally, as his instructions make us righteous; and we do so, figuratively, as his instructions fully declare that system of pardoning mercy, by which it pleases God to accept and to treat us, as if we were righteous, in a far more perfect manner than any human being can claim to be considered.

I shall close this survey of scriptural phrases with one or two suggestions of a practical nature.

1. The first is, on the propriety of a zealous pursuit of religious knowledge—on the study of the Bible. Were it not better to read less, and think more?—to peruse, perhaps, fewer chapters of our sacred books, and oftener to pause on the verses that compose them, and to ascertain their exact meaning? To say nothing of the limits of our knowledge, does it not want accuracy? And is not the vagueness and generality of our notions, one reason why they make so little impression upon us? Is not this one grand reason why the public services of religion so slightly and so transiently affect us? Does it—can it consist with the sense of a moral creature to have

clear perceptions of such a subject as religion, and be indifferent to it—a thousand times more indifferent, perhaps, than to the merest trifle of earthly acquisition. I am persuaded it does not. I am persuaded, that there is a better nature within us, that would assert itself, if we would give it the opportunity.

2. Again; in pursuing these observations, we can hardly have failed to perceive how strong are the indirect intimations, which the scriptures give of the fallen and unhappy state of human nature. Every thing which we are taught concerning our duty, our interest, our spiritual welfare, points to our deficiency and danger. Thus the attainment of the true dignity, excellence, and happiness of our being, is called a salvation. It is a rescue,—it is an escape. It is not an early vigour, and a splendid improvement, but it is poverty, and weakness, and redemption that we hear of. It comes not to us with the beauty and joy of innocence, but under the humbler aspect and name of relief. The richest boon of our existence, you thus see, bears an inscription that testifies to our unworthiness. Observe, too, the characteristics and descriptions of this blessing. The commencement of all that is good within us, must needs be called a renovation; its progress is a conflict; its end is a release. The ritual expressions of it too, are baptismal waters, to wash away our sins, and the symbols of suffering and death, that was endured for us.

There is then an implication pervading the whole scriptures of the most humbling nature. I had rather, says Dr Paley, in speaking of that branch of the christian evidence, which he has so acutely traced out in his

Horæ Paulinæ—"I had rather at any time, surprise a coincidence in an oblique allusion, than read it in broad assertions." His meaning is, that it conveys more proof. And it is so with the subject before us. Stronger than all the direct accusations of guilt in the sacred writings, and more humbling and touching to our feelings, is the indirect and universal recognition in them of our unworthiness—the taking this for granted in the whole system of religion, which they mark out, and as it were, the involuntary aspect of distrust and apprehension, with which they regard our condition and prospects.

If this is apparent, no less so is it, that the sum, the purport, the design, the end, of the sacred revelation, is our purity. This design gives to it its titles; holds throughout the tenor of its instruction, and marks all its deep and strong characters. We may have read this volume much and long; we may have gathered up its treasures of sacred history; we may have laboriously investigated its system of doctrine; we may have applied all knowledge and all criticism to elicit its incomparable beauties; and yet if we have not imbibed the spirit, the virtue, the purity, that it recommends, we are nothing!

But I must proceed, as I proposed, in the second place, to notice some of those TERMS AND PHRASES, BY WHICH THE SUBJECTS OF RELIGION ARE COMMONLY DESCRIBED AT THE PRESENT DAY.

Every age has had its *technical* terms and phrases in religion. Within certain limits they are unavoidable. But these limits have, by no means, been preserved; and the multitude of such phrases has brought with it

many evils and abuses. Technical phrases have been defined to be "the peculiar dialect of a particular class." Thus, every class of christians has its peculiar dialect,—certain expressions, which, standing by themselves and without any other words to explain them, have currency and credit as the language of piety. A moment's recollection will probably bring to the mind of my reader a number of such phrases, that are peculiar to the different classes of christians with whom he has been acquainted. These peculiarities of language, let it also be observed, will always be found to prevail most and to be most singular, among those sects that are least informed, and have the least intercourse with society at large. This observation is by no means confined to religion, but extends, as a little reflection may convince any one, to the secular pursuits and occupations of life. It is only in religion, however, unless we add the subject of political science also, that this technical phraseology is attended with any ill consequence. This, however, will best appear, together with some other considerations relating to the same subject, after mentioning a few instances of this phraseology which I have it in view to state.

In doing so, I shall notice three kinds of phrases—viz. those which describe *the process of becoming religious*—those which describe *the thing itself*—and finally, those which consist *of the titles that are appropriated to persons considered religious.* I shall make one or two cursory observations as I pass these topics, in review, and then recur to the general observations I intended to make on the frequent use of technical terms in religion.

Let me only premise that I am not about to speak

with lightness or severity of those phrases, which are commonly used as the expressions of religious feeling. I appeal not to a fastidious, but to a wise, dispassionate, and candid judgment. No reflecting person will think an inquiry into the language of religion, a light or unimportant one. Language is the medium of thought, and it gives a complexion to our thoughts. Words, too, are the weapons of religious controversy; and many who are in reality contending for the same thing, imagine themselves to be at variance, only because they fight with different weapons. To reconcile such—to lead others from the words they use, to the things they mean, —to urge all, to go beyond the letter to the spirit of religion—these objects surely are worth an exertion.

Let us turn then to the subjects proposed, in the order in which they have been mentioned.

1. The process of becoming religious is the first of these, and is commonly described by the phrases, *being anxious—being under concern—seeing the plague of one's own heart—being struck under conviction or distress—being brought out* of this state—*having a view of Christ—obtaining a hope—and meeting with a change*, that is, a change of heart.

And the first observation, that I have to make concerning these expressions, is, that they mean just as much and no more, than to say of any one, that he has been led to see his faults, to lament what is wrong in himself and in the sight of God, to repent of his sins, to strive for purity of heart, to watch with anxiety against temptation, and to walk in the way of uprightness and piety. These expressions, I say, indicate all that is necessary in the way of becoming pious; they do *vir-*

tually and in substance mean as much as the more popular and technical phrases of the day; though they do not *circumstantially*, perhaps.

And this suggests to me another observation, concerning the phrases in question. They convey or they imply too much that is circumstantial. They seem to shadow forth some dreadful process, that is to be passed through, in order to become religious. They do therefore, throw obstacles in the way. They are too figurative—too extravagant—and they too much confine and shut up the mind to one certain course and process of experience. Besides; these phrases are some of them liable to objections individually. "Having a view of Christ," is apt to convey to the mind the idea, at least, of some speculative view of his character, quite different from that admiring and affectionate sense of his excellence and his compassion, which every christian will desire to cherish. "Obtaining a hope," too, is a very different thing, certainly, from obtaining religion; and it is often *found* to be a very different thing from obtaining the charity, modesty, and gentleness of the christian temper.

And, "meeting with a change," is a phrase, we fear, which implies, to the general mind, too sudden, and too passive an experience. *Meeting with* any thing, in the manner here used, is a language that is applied to fortune and fate—to some inevitable event. What a man meets with he cannot help. It is the same as to say, that something hath befallen him. Now this is not the way in which religion approaches us. It does not happen to a man, but it is sought and obtained by him. Nor does it come as suddenly as the language is understood

to mean. No man becomes a christian, a spiritual and self-denying disciple of Jesus Christ, in an hour or a day.

2. The next class of phrases relates to the thing—to religion itself. This is represented by such expressions, as the following:—*an interest in Christ—receiving comfort—rejoicing:*—or religion is more abstractly denominated *grace, godliness, seriousness, solemnity:*—or the parts, or some of the parts of it, are described, as *a compassion for sinners, love of the brethren, love of souls, &c.*

I wish it not to be supposed that I object to all the religious phrases in common use; but I say again, that the expressions here recited mean no more than the words virtue, piety, kindness, religious fervor and earnestness. Grace, is a gracious, or religious disposition; godliness, is a godly or pious disposition; seriousness, is consideration or thoughtfulness of mind; and solemnity, (if the word were not used incorrectly altogether in this connexion,) would be the same as reverence and awe. Again, the phrase "compassion for sinners," means no more than pity for the thoughtless, for the unworthy, for those who are enslaved by their passions; and, "the love of souls," means no more than benevolence, directed indeed to the greatest, the spiritual interests of men. I do not deny, that the language in question may *seem* to those with whom it is a favorite language, to mean much more than that which I prefer as more simple, sober, and spiritual; but I say that, considering the natural and abstract force of terms, we shall find it to mean no more, than the ordinary phraseology in which we are wont to express ourselves.

It must be added also, with regard to some of these, as with regard to some of the expressions before quoted,

that they are, (taken by themselves,) of questionable propriety. "An interest in Christ,"—if the phrase does not describe a state of mind, and then it is very proper,—is a very vague expression, and is liable to be mystical. "Receiving comfort" and "rejoicing," may be things very different from humility and self-reproach, or from real goodness and devotion; and certainly they are feelings least of all proper to the very commencement of the religious course. "Seriousness," too, is very little satisfactory as a description of piety, and still less distinctive; for the worst men, the most criminal and vindictive, are generally, and have reason to be, the most serious. Besides, to represent feelings of anxiety and distress as the way, and serious and solemn affections as the end—to do this I mean, as *frequently* as *is* done—is to present not a very attractive description of true religion. As to the phrase, "love of the brethren," I am persuaded that it conveys to most minds, a sentiment too narrow, too sectarian,—too limited at any rate for the liberality of the christian precepts. Who are the brethren? Those of our particular church, I suppose, would be meant, or those of the christian church at large, or those who in our judgment are real christians. Now to love the members of our own, or of the general church, may be a very doubtful indication of a generous, disinterested, and affectionate mind. This "love of the brethren," is extremely apt to be like the feeling which the Jews entertained, that they only were the sanctified, and all the rest, unholy Gentiles. I believe that our Saviour inculcated a much more expansive affection, to be the predominant one, though we are taught indeed to feel a peculiar regard for the good and faithful. But we are

taught not to love these alone. We are instructed to look upon all men as our brethren. Does any one suppose, that when our Saviour says, in his anticipated benediction upon the kind and charitable, "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these *my brethren*, ye have done it unto me;"—does any one suppose, I say, that he means here, only his followers—the members of his church? No; he that laboured for the spiritual welfare of the whole human race, and gave his life for the world, felt, in the benevolence and sympathy of his heart, that he was the friend and brother of every man!

3. I must pass now, very briefly, to notice some of the titles which, in modern times, are given to christians. They are called *converts—church members—professors* and *professing christians—the pious*, &c. On these without enlarging the catalogue, I shall only remark, that the word "converts," would be more appropriate to those who should embrace a new religion; that as to the appellation "church members," it is manifestly wrong and injurious to confound the outward profession with the inward and spiritual virtue; that, "professing christians" is a phrase which carries with it, a sound of pretension, not very consistent with that feeling of *con*fession with which christians are apt to regard themselves; and that the appellation, "the pious," conveys but a part of the christian character, and a part too, which, though it is the support and safeguard of all, our superstition leads us to overvalue. Piety is not the whole of christian excellence; and it were well, if those to whom this excellence is attributed, were, and could with propriety oftener be called, not the pious only, but *the good*. There is certainly some danger that piety,—an imperfect piety,

indeed—may be cultivated, if not at the expense, at least, to the exclusion of the kind and charitable affections.

These cursory observations have been made partly in vindication of some among us, not of any one sect, but found more or less in almost every class of christians, who have chosen to lay aside a part of the popular and technical religious phraseology of the day. They have chosen to do so, because they think there is other language equally significant, and more simple; and because they think that many of these phrases are liable to particular objections. Some of these objections have been pointed out. I have now only to add some general remarks to the same purpose.

In the first place, I object to the free use of these peculiar and technical phrases, as helping to give a character of *indistinctness to religion*—as helping to prevent that discrimination about religious ideas, which is so necessary to their progress and improvement. These phrases throw a mist over the matters of religion. We do not know what they mean; nor do those who use them know. At any rate, they are less likely to know; for the very currency of these phrases saves them from examination. And it requires very little thought, or discrimination, or understanding of religion, to use them, and to use them with fluency and profuseness. Whereas, if a man had to select his terms and form his phrases from the general mass of words, he would be obliged to think, to discriminate, to understand. And no surer method of advancement could be recommended, to an individual, than for him *often and carefully to inquire into the meaning of those words and phrases*, which he is accustomed to use.

Connected with this indistinctness of perception, which

the multitude of technical expressions introduces into religion, is the *heartless nessand hypocrisy*, which they shelter. We object to the frequency of such expressions, because they make it too easy for a man to appear religious. It is too easy to write, and talk, and preach about religion with these helps. This repeating of words, this outside—this bare semblance, (for it is nothing more,) does not satisfy us. It *may* satisfy others; we suppose that it does; nay, we know that such things have great weight with many. If one comes to them, clothed with certain phrases, and uses certain tones also, and puts on certain aspects of countenance, he is accepted. We speak not this by way of disparagement. We think it is perfectly natural. But we certainly think it unfortunate, that so slight a warranty should suffice; unfortunate for him who brings it, unfortunate for them who receive it, unfortunate for the cause of a pure and earnest religion. We wish that men should be *obliged* to think and *feel* on such a subject;—or have nothing to do with it. The day has come, we believe, to have more of reality and to rely less on mere show. We would not rashly or without cause, throw away any of the good old phrases; but, who will plead for a phrase, when the matter of feeling is in jeopardy; or when that phrase may be the mere semblance of a feeling; and that semblance may pass for the reality?

But the greatest evil of all, in having to so great an extent, a peculiar dialect in religion is, *that it tends to make religion itself a peculiar thing*,—to shut it up and to prevent its diffusion through the mass of society,—to keep it aloof from the ordinary feelings and interests of man. This has always been the great evil. The religion

of Pagan Greece and Rome, was a spectacle and pageant. The religion of christendom, in its worst state, has been a solemnity and a ceremony. The grand improvement,—the second Reformation, which is now demanded, is to carry religion into the midst of life—to apply it to the springs of action,—to bring it into the most familiar intimacy with the human heart,—to make religion the guide, the friend, the companion of every thought and purpose of the mind. Now this technical language, this dialect of which I have been speaking, acts very much like the solemnities and pomps, the masses and mysteries of old, to keep religion estranged from the human heart,—from the free contemplation, and easy intercourse of human life. The language in question, is to men *generally*, a strange language. In all the popular literature and reading of the day, in the classical and standard works of the English language, this peculiar religious phraseology is scarcely to be found. In the ordinary conversation of society it cannot be introduced; at least, it cannot, without a consciousness of being singular and awkward, and without, therefore, increasing the feeling, that religion is in its nature something unnatural, peculiar, and strange. Suppose that any one in his conversation with society at large, uses this language; suppose that he says grace for goodness, and godliness for piety, and an interest in Christ, for the blessings of religion, and obtaining a hope, for entertaining the great expectation of a happy immortality,—will he not be looked upon with surprise or with ridicule? And is it desirable, is it at all needful, that he should draw upon himself or his religion, this sort of observation? Is he faithful to the treasure of a good heart, if he does so? Does he thus let

his light shine? Does he thus glorify his Father in heaven? —Or, if this phraseology is confined to the pulpit,—if the pulpit has its dialect, and tone and manner,—is it *expedient* that it should be so distinguished? These peculiar expressions, delivered in a certain manner, may have a certain effect,—they may spread an awe over the assembly,—they may awaken a mechanical feeling; but I ask, is it not one great evil with regard to all the deep and solemn impressions of the sanctuary, that they are so transient? And why are they so transient and insufficient? Because, in part,—because they are so mechanical,—because the instrument of producing these impressions is so artificial, so technical,—because the real springs of feeling and action are not touched. You will say, it is because men are not truly and thoroughly interested in religion. But why are they not interested? Because they are so *cold, indifferent*, and *ungrateful?* But this is only saying the same thing,—*they are not interested.* The true question is—*why* are they not really and permanently interested by *what they hear?* And in answer to this, let me ask, how do you ever expect men to be interested at all, as listeners to the truths of religion? Or, to bring the question of technical phraseology to its real merits,—what is the most likely method of producing this result? Is it not by speaking to them in that very language and tone, with which they are daily accustomed to move one another? Is the heart ever to be communed with as it ought to be, through the medium of *technical language?* Much more, may I say, is it the best medium? No; so far from this, that all the most powerful eloquence, not of the Bar, and of the Senate only, but of the Pulpit, too, has always kept entirely

clear of all technical language! It has found its words of power in the common, habitual, daily speech of men! Could any fact be more completely decisive than this? When men have been engaged in petty explanations or dull statements, it has been often necessary for them to use a technical, a professional language, but as they have risen to earnestness and power, just in that proportion they have thrown aside this language, as an incumbrance and a shackle to the free action of the soul.

Thus, too, shall religion yet go forth,—emancipated from every restraint of "set speech," and affected tone, and countenance; and it shall commune with man's heart, as nothing ever before communed with it; and it shall be near to him as a friend; and it shall mingle with all his pursuits, and take a part in all his business, and give innocency and gladness to all his pleasures: and it shall speak within him, when he speaks, and act within him when he acts; and it shall be as the voice of eloquence to arouse him, and as the sound of music to inspire him with gentleness; and it shall be his shield against calamity, and his exceeding great reward forever!

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A

LETTER

ON

THE PRINCIPLES

OF THE

MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE.

THIRD EDITION.

PRINTED FOR THE

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The Executive Committee of the American Unitarian Association have been induced to publish this as one of their series of tracts, by a conviction that the subject discussed is highly important, and the manner in which it is here treated cannot fail "to promote the interests of pure Christianity throughout our country."

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This tract was first published in July, 1826, and the first annual meeting of the Amer. Unit. Assoc. to which reference is made on the 4th page, was held in the preceding May.

PRINTED BY I. R. BUTTS....BOSTON.

LETTER.

To the Executive Committee of the

American Unitarian Association.

Gentlemen,

Debarred, as I am at present, from the exercises of the pulpit, by the feeble state of my health, and still solicitous to do what I may for the sacred cause to which I am dedicated, I would ask for permission, through you, to address a few thoughts to the members of your Association, upon *the principles of the foreign missionary enterprise*. There have long been, and still are, as I think, both great vagueness, and great extravagance of language upon this subject, alike among the friends, and the opposers, of the cause of foreign missions. Some of our Orthodox brethren have taken the ground, that all the heathen, merely as such, are condemned to endless, and to irremediable misery, unless indeed they shall be converted to Christianity; a doctrine from which Unitarians turn with horror; and others of them, in advocating the enterprise, in their care to use terms less objectionable, have employed those only, which are too indefinite to bring home a strong sense of its obligation to any mind, which was not previously disposed to engage in it. And most Unitarians, resting on the prin-

ciples, that men will be judged according to what they have, and not according to what they have not; and that, when God will have any section of the heathen world to be enlightened by Christianity, he will himself indicate his purpose, and provide the means for its accomplishment, have either thought but little upon the subject, or have waited for very distinct instructions respecting their duty in the service. A new era, however, seems now to have begun among Unitarians, on the question of the duty of Christians to unite in the work of extending the knowledge, and the influences of our religion. The primary objects for which your Association was formed, I know, were, "to diffuse the knowledge, and to promote the interests, of pure christianity *throughout our country*." But at the annual meeting of the Association, a resolution was unanimously passed, "that this Association views with high gratification the prospect, which is opened of a more extended mutual acquaintance, and cooperation, among Unitarian Christians throughout the world." This shows that your thoughts have been directed to the situation of other lands, and the extent and activity of your operations recommended an address to you, in preference to any other mode of communicating my views to those whom I am desirous to reach. I hope, therefore, that, as my attention has been for some time employed on this subject, I may, without exposure to the imputation of arrogance, call the attention of Unitarian Christians among us to the general, — the original question, in regard to foreign missions. This is a question, which, I think, has not yet obtained the attention, which it claims from us; and a fair and full consideration of

which, it seems to me, can hardly fail to bring Christians of every name, to a cordial cooperation in every well devised scheme, for the greatest possible extension of the privileges, and the blessings of Christianity.

Allow me, then, to propose to the members of the American Unitarian Association, and to all Unitarian Christians, the inquiries, —*the missionary spirit, what is it? what are its principles?* Are they, or are they not, among the essential principles of our religion? Are they, or are they not, the principles by which our Lord and his apostles were actuated? Does the cause, or does it not, demand the sympathy, the earnestness, and the aid of every Christian?

I am aware that there are those, and they are probably not few, who will not at once be disposed to view the missionary enterprise, as we now see it, as essentially the very enterprise of our Lord and his apostles. I know, too, that there are those who consider the missionary spirit, as often as they hear of it, but as one of the many forms which an ungoverned religious enthusiasm assumes, and that there are those also, who are accustomed to view it even more unfavorably; and but as one of the forms, which are assumed by ambition, or by avarice, for mere party, selfish, or worldly objects. There are those, who will meet our first suggestion of this subject with the inquiries, "have not the heathen as good a right to their religion, as you have to yours? Is not their religion as dear to them, as yours is to you? Are they not as sincere believers as you are; and will not God accept them in their sincerity?" We shall be asked, "what injury results to you from the faith, or practices of the heathen world? Or, who has commis-

sioned you to quench the fire of their sacrifices, and to overthrow their altars? Think you, that they will be cast out from the presence and favor of God, in the life to come, because they know not him, of whom they have never heard; or that, at the bar of heaven they will be tried by a law, which they have never had an opportunity to know? Are they not as happy in their faith as you are in yours; and, if God intends their conversion to Christianity, will he not himself bring them to the faith of the gospel?"

These are inquiries which are abroad, and which are to be fairly met. They involve objections to the missionary cause, which ought to be fairly answered. They may be, and they are, proposed by mere cavillers; by men who care not for religion in any form; and who would advocate, or oppose anything, by which they may either justify their own irreligion, or thwart and vex those, who, they think, are mere pretenders to more religion than they have themselves. But they are made, too, by men, whom they restrain from sympathy in the missionary cause, only because it has not been viewed by them in all its bearings, and obligations. They are made by men, who have been disgusted with the cause, or at least have been rendered averse from it, by the overcharged statements that have been made in defence of it; by the injudicious manner in which it has often been conducted; by the means which have been employed in its support; by the spirit and manner of some of its agents; and, by what has been thought to be the waste of treasure that has been made, in most ostentatiously doing *nothing*. Let us then meet these inquiries, as the objections of fair minds; and answer them, by an

appeal to principles, which fair minds will readily acknowledge. In other words, let us follow back the missionary enterprise into its essential principles. Let us consider the subject, not as belonging to one or another of the parties of Christendom, but, purely as one belonging to our common interests, and duties, as disciples of Christ. Let it even be forgotten, if it may be, that any missionary efforts are now making; that any missionary societies are now existing; and let us dispassionately consider the enterprise, as a subject for speculation; as a question upon which we are to determine, what is our duty as Christians? If it be not a work, which God will have us to do, the sooner it comes to naught, the better. But if it be his will that we engage in it, let us not oppose it, lest haply we be found to fight against God.

I resume, then, the inquiry, *the missionary spirit, — what is it? what are its principles?*

I answer, the *first* principle of a missionary spirit, or a spirit which is earnest in the cause of diffusing the knowledge and influence of our religion, is, *a Christian sense of the moral and religious condition of those, who are living under the influences of heathenism, and of false religion.*

The question arises, what is a christian sense of the religious and moral condition of those, who are living under the influences of heathenism, and of false religion?

I know of but one way, in which we can obtain a satisfactory answer to this inquiry; or an answer to it, with which we ought to be satisfied; and that is, by endeavoring as well as we may, to see the world, to the extent to which it is unenlightened by our religion, as our

Lord and his Apostles saw it; to see the religious and moral condition of our fellow creatures, who are unblessed with Christianity, as it is exposed to us in the light of the will and purposes of God, in regard to the world, as they are made known to us in the New Testament. No one, — I mean, no sincere believer in Christ, — can doubt whether he ought to view those who are without the pale of Christianity, as our religion itself views them; or whether we ought to feel, to cherish, and to exercise towards them, the sentiments which our religion expresses in regard to them. What, then, are the views and sentiments of our religion, in respect to the heathen world, and to all who are without the knowledge of Christ?

I say not, for Christianity does not say, that among the heathen, and the believers of a false religion, none are virtuous. There were in the time of our Lord, and there are now, virtuous and good men under every form of religion in the world. Nor do I say, for our religion does not say, that the offerers of a false worship, as far as this worship is offered in simplicity and sincerity of heart, are not accepted by God. I have not a doubt upon the question, whether they are accepted by him. I believe, for I think that our religion teaches us, that in every nation, he that fears God, according to the best conceptions which he has of him, and does righteousness, as far as he understands the law of righteousness, is spiritually a child of God, and will not fail of a part in the inheritance of the children of God. And I further believe, and doubt not, that no one who has lived, or who will live, from the necessity of his condition, ignorant of the true God, in false religion, and in an idolatrous wor-

ship, will at last be condemned, because he knew not what he could not know; and did not, what he had not the means of understanding that it was his duty to do. These, I hope, will be considered as ample concessions. *

But, with all these concessions distinctly before us, let us view the heathen world, — the world that is without Christianity, — as our religion views it, and as it actually is. I would not, if I could, excite a false, an artificial sympathy, in the cause of missions. Christianity needs no plotting, no trick, no concealment, no overcharged representations, for the accomplishment of any of its purposes. But let us not shut our eyes against the truth. Let us not view heathenism, and false religion, only as they are seen in the characters of a few

* I here quote with pleasure the sentiments of Macknight upon the question of the salvation of heathens. I do not know any other writer, of those who are called Orthodox, who has treated this subject with equal liberality of feeling. "That the pious heathens should have their faith counted to them for righteousness at the judgment, notwithstanding it may have been deficient in many particulars, and even erroneous, is not unreasonable; provided in these instances of error, they have used their best endeavors to know the truth, and have not been led by these errors into habitual sin.*** For it can no longer be pretended, that by making faith the means of salvation, the gospel hath consigned all the heathens to damnation. Neither can God be accused of partiality, in conferring the benefit of revelation upon so small a portion of the human race, in the false notion, that the actual knowledge of revelation is necessary to salvation. For although the number of those, who have lived without revelation, hath hitherto been much greater than of those who have enjoyed that benefit, no unrighteousness can be imputed to God, since he hath not excluded those from salvation, who have been denied revelation." Translation of the Apostolical Epistles, vol. 1. pp. 197—201.

individuals, who stand out in most honorable prominence, in the picture which has come down to us of their age; and who, against every adverse influence, were illustrious as models of a piety and virtue, which would have made them worthy of honor in any age. Nor let us determine the character of heathenism, and of false religion, by considering them as they are manifested merely in their gorgeous shows; in their pomp and splendor; or, as they are sometimes brought before us, in their most simple and harmless rites. They have other features, which are the indices of another character. They have other principles, and interests, and ends, than are to be seen in a casual glance at them; other practices and consequences, which open to us very different views of their nature and character; and which are suited to excite a corresponding difference of sentiment, in regard to those who are under their influence. Let us, then, view them in the light in which they are brought before us by the sentiments, the feelings, and conduct, of Christ and his apostles, in regard to them.

In this aspect of the subject, I would say that, even if there were not to be found in the records of our religion any clear and explicit expressions of its sentiments in respect to the heathen, and to all to whom a knowledge of it has not been imparted, it still would not be doubtful what are these sentiments; or, what are the feelings with which *we* should view the world, which is without the knowledge of Christ. Take only the *conduct* of our Lord and of his apostles, their labors, and their sufferings even to death, in the cause of extending and establishing our religion; in the cause of opposing, and exterminating error, superstition and sin; in the

cause of rescuing men from the delusion, and the debasement, of idolatry and of all false worship; and who, that believes that Christianity is a dispensation from God, can doubt whether the rescue of men from this delusion and this debasement, — whether the recovery of heathens, and of those who are living under the influences of false religion, from their errors, superstitions and sins, — was in itself a cause as great and important, as essential to human good and to human happiness, as this plan in the divine economy, and these toils, and privations, and sufferings for its accomplishment, were themselves great and peculiar? Let us conceive, as distinctly as we can, of the *character* of our Lord. Let us bring him before our minds, as he is brought before us in the New Testament, as the Son of God; the long promised Messiah, and Saviour, whom the Father had sanctified and sent into the world, for the express end, "that the world through him might be saved." Let us bring him before our minds, associated, as he is, throughout the New Testament, in his mission, and life, and death, if I may so express myself, with the deep interest of God himself in the cause of suppressing everywhere idolatry and false religion, and of recovering men from the degradation, the vices and crimes, to which ignorance of himself and superstition had brought them. Let us conceive of this most exalted, this most holy of all the messengers of God, laboring daily, and daily suffering, that he might bring men to the truth, and sanctify them by the truth; enduring the scoffs, the insults, the artifices, and the persecutions of those, whom he came "to save, and to bless, by turning them from their iniquities unto God;"

and at last, in the cause of that salvation which he preached, and for which alone he lived, "humbling himself to death, even the death of the cross." Let us hear him, when he sends forth his apostles to preach the gospel to every creature, saying to them, "he that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved, and he that believeth not, shall be condemned." And let us follow these apostles, who have given up everything of this world, that they might preach every where "the unsearchable riches of Christ," as they spread themselves through Syria, Phœnicia, the populous provinces of Asia Minor, and of Macedonia and Greece, comprehending the cities of Antioch, of Lystra and Derbe, of Thessalonica and Philippi, of Corinth and Ephesus, of Athens and Rome; and, if we should believe tradition, visiting even Spain, and the shores of Gaul and Britain. Like their Master, they are willing "to spend and to be spent," in the work; and they "account all things to be but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ;" for the privilege, as widely as possible, of extending it over the earth; and, like their Master, every one of them dies in the cause; and most of them, the victims of their fidelity in it. Suppose, then, that our religion had not given to us any very definite expressions of the religious and moral state of those, who were living in heathenism and false religion. Must not their condition, I would ask, have been most deplorable, to have excited this sympathy, this interest, stronger than death, in their recovery; to have led to this wonderful plan, in God's moral providence, and to these wonderful means, for their rescue, their salvation? Can it then be a question, what is the interest, the

earnestness, which we should feel, in the cause of diffusing the knowledge, the spirit, and the blessings of our religion?

But the *language* of our Lord and of his apostles, in reference to the religious and moral condition of those who are without the gospel, is not equivocal. Interpreted as they should be, by the import which his own, and the conduct of his apostles have given to them, the expressions, surely, are full of most solemn and affecting meaning. "The Son of man came, to seek, and to save, that which was lost." Again, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life: for, God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." Again; "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Again; "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me, may not abide in darkness, but may have the light of life." And, in conformity with this language, the apostle of the gentiles represents them as "without God in the world," and without any rational hope. He says to them, "ye were darkness; but now are ye light in the Lord." "Ye were far off;" but now are "made nigh by the blood of Christ." But instead of quoting detached expressions on this subject, let me refer any one, who would conceive rightly of it, to the three first chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. Here is a picture of degradation, of sin and misery, which will prepare any one, who has read the evangelists with any serious attention, for the inference of the author of this epistle. "We

have proved both of Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin."

Our Lord, indeed, uttered no denunciations against the mere officers of a false worship; nor did his apostles, great as was their zeal for the conversion of men, pronounce anathemas against them, merely as idolaters. But our religion contemplates idolatry, and all false religion, even in their best state, and least corrupting influence, as a delusion, from which God in his mercy would rescue those who are living under them. It also brings idolatry and false religion before us, as the history of all time represents them, as the prolific mothers of all the vices and crimes, that can debase our nature and disqualify for heaven. In the view of Christ and his apostles, the world was worshipping, "they knew not what." Men were not only in darkness, but were "loving darkness better than light, because their deeds were evil." They were immortal beings; yet "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in them;" "given up to uncleanness, and to vile affections;" degraded from the condition, and lost to the purposes, for which God designed them. Let it be admitted then, that there were those, both among Jews and Gentiles, who, before they had heard the teaching of our Lord and of his apostles, were prepared to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. Still, the records of the evangelists, of the apostles, and of profane history, alike assure us, that offences both against piety and virtue, which are not to be named among Christians, were not only established by usage, but were sanctioned by all the authority, which the opinion and example of the master spirits of

the age could give to them. We do not violate charity, when we say of the decidedly virtuous heathen in the time of our Lord, that they were *few*; that they shone as stars, appearing here and there in a night, when heavy and black clouds had gathered, and were rolling tumultuously through the air, accumulating in their progress new elements of a storm, which was threatening to burst with tremendous violence upon the earth. And I would ask, has any important change, since that time, been made in the character of heathenism, and of false religion? If not, what should be our sentiments of them? And, what are our obligations in regard to those, who know not God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent?

"While Paul waited at Athens," as we are told, "his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given up to idolatry." This translation of the words of the evangelist, however, expresses but feebly the emotions, which were excited in the mind of the Apostle, when he saw everywhere about him the images, that were worshipped by the Athenians. So zealous, indeed, as is well known, were the Greeks, and especially the Athenians, for this species of worship, that, not satisfied with the number of deities, which had come down to them from their fathers, they not only often consecrated new ones of their own invention, but freely adopted also the gods of other nations. Nay, so careful were they not to omit the acknowledgment of any divine power, whether celestial, terrestrial, or infernal, which they even suspected might claim their homage, that they erected altars to unknown gods; until they had no

less than thirty thousand objects of worship.* Paul, therefore, saw the city, not only given up wholly to idolatry, but full of the images of the gods of Greece. He saw the city most renowned in the world for the triumphs of art, the most splendid on the earth in its temples, the proudest in its schools of philosophy; the city, to which even imperial Rome sent the most distinguished of its youth, to train them for the forum, and to qualify them to be instructers at home, filled with idols. He saw the city, which was the centre of the learning of the world, lying in the darkness of utter ignorance of the one true God. He saw the human mind, there, at once exalted by every earthly attainment, and depraved and debased by the most licentious and corrupt superstition. He saw those immortal beings prostituting the highest powers of their nature to the lowest and vilest services; and dishonoring alike themselves, and God their Maker. Not only therefore was his spirit "stirred within him;" but his was at once, a mingled emotion of indignation against those, who, "professing themselves to be wise," had closed their minds against the knowledge of God, and were blind leaders of the blind: of pity towards the miserably deluded multitude; of zeal for the cause of God and of human nature; and of earnestness for the reformation, and the salvation of men, so lost in ignorance and sin. It was the excitement of a mind, which was enlightened and sanctified by christian conceptions of God, and by christian sentiments of the worship and duty, which man owes to his Maker. It was the action of a mind, under the influence of chris-

* Robinson's Archæologia, p. 195.

tian views of the condition of man, while yet in idolatry and sin; and of the designs of God in regard to the world, by his Son Jesus Christ. It was the movement of a mind, which felt the infinite worth of the religion of Christ; which felt an unquenchable zeal for the extension of its blessings; and which could not be satisfied with itself, while anything was neglected, that could be done to reform, and to save the world.

We have, indeed no reason to suppose, that Paul was more strongly affected by the spectacle of idols and of idolatry at Athens, than he was at Rome, or at Corinth, or at Ephesus, or at Thessalonica; or than he was at any place, in which he witnessed the triumph of a false and a debasing worship, and the corruption of heart and manners that are associated with it. We have here but the incidental expression of a feeling, or rather of a state of mind, with which he everywhere, and at all times, looked upon the heathen world. He had been sent forth, like the other apostles, "to preach the gospel to every creature;" to call men, "everywhere, to repent and to turn to God; to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light;" and everywhere to establish the worship and service of the one God, "through the one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." And, in this cause, he had made the greatest personal sacrifices to which man could be called; and had endured all that man could sustain. I need not enter into a detail of his journeyings, of his labors, and of the persecutions which he suffered, while, with unimpaired fortitude and resolution, he ceased not, in the city and the country, on the land and on the sea, while at liberty and while in chains, by conversation, by preaching and by his let-

ters, to do all that man could do, to reclaim his fellow-men from idolatry and sin, to the faith of Christ; to the knowledge, and love, and worship of God; and to holiness here, in preparation for immortal happiness hereafter. We all know, in this work Paul persisted against all obstacles, and under every accumulation of suffering, untired, and undiscouraged; and that, like his Master, he gloriously terminated his life and his toils together in the cause. — I would then ask any one, who is opposed to the missionary cause, or who is indifferent concerning it, here to pause and seriously to consider, whence was this sympathy of Paul in the moral condition of the heathen world? Was it unreasonable? Was it excessive? Were his efforts, or his sacrifices, beyond the fair demands, or the true importance, of the object? Or did he in truth feel no more for this cause, than ought to be felt for it by every Christian?

The true view of heathenism is, not that it is a condition, in which, if a man die, he is therefore necessarily under eternal condemnation. Terrible thought; and most dishonorable alike to God, and to Christianity! But, still, that it is a condition of darkness, of sin, and wretchedness, from which it is God's purpose to redeem the world. Paul saw not, nor did any of the apostles see in the heathen world, men who were doomed to endless perdition, only because they were pagans. But he saw in them the human nature degraded and debased; and his was a deep, and strong feeling of the greatness of the change, in character, in condition, and in happiness, which a cordial reception of Christianity would bring to them. He saw in them men, who were groping their way, they knew not whither; and who were sinking

deeper in moral turpitude by the very efforts, the very services, to which their false and debasing conceptions of religion were leading them. He saw the moral image of God in the soul to be marred and defiled; and he saw, and felt that, by the religion of Christ alone, its beauty and its purity could be restored. In these sentiments, and these feelings, is the first element of the missionary spirit; or of a spirit alive to the cause of the greatest practicable extension of the gospel of Christ. If, then, we see our fellow creatures in the darkness, and debasement, and misery of superstition, idolatry and crime, and have none of the sympathy with their condition which Paul felt, and none of the interest which our religion breathes from every page of its records, in the cause of their deliverance, their redemption, have we the spirit of the disciples of Christ? or, are we Christians?

Different views are taken of heathenism, and of false religion, and very different sentiments are excited in regard to them, far less from the actual diversity of their character, — although, indeed, it differs greatly in different places, — than from the diversity of the state of mind in which it is contemplated by men. An infidel has told us, that "the religion of the Pagans consisted alone in morality and festivals; in morality, which is common to men in all ages and countries; and in festivals, which were no other than seasons of rejoicing, and which could bring with them no injury to mankind."* And with a merely speculative Christian, by whom religion is regarded only as a matter of opinion, — a sub-

* Voltaire's Louis XIV.

ject for occasional discussion, the pagan idolatry was, and is, a mere speculative absurdity. With those who view religion only as a political engine, Paganism, and all religion, is good or bad, as it is favorable or unfavorable to their views of civil policy. And by those, who care little or nothing for the religion in which they have been educated, in any of its forms, or of its characteristic sentiments, no interest whatever will, of course, be felt in the religious or moral condition of the world. But neither did our Lord, nor his apostles, look upon heathenism with indifference; nor only, nor peculiarly in its political bearings; nor as a mere error of judgment; nor as an innocent, or a moral institution. No. Had our Lord and his apostles reasoned of the world, as too many now reason of those who are without the knowledge of God, and the blessings of his gospel; had they said, "the time has not come to bring Jews and heathens to the knowledge of the truth. They are not qualified to receive it. God will execute his own work, in his own time. They are safe. They will be judged in equity, and in mercy. Why then interfere, where our interference is not requested?"—Had our Lord and his apostles thus reasoned of the world, what would now have been our condition? How much better than that of the ancient idolaters of Athens or of Rome; or the modern idolaters of Hindoostan or of China? Let impartial justice preside over the inquiry, and I have no fear concerning the decision upon it in every mind.

May I not then say to you, reader, whoever you may be, cultivate a christian sense of the religious and moral condition of those, who are living under the influences of heathenism, and of false religion, and, like Paul's,

your spirit will be "stirred in you," when you look upon the nations that are "wholly given up to idolatry?" Yes, carry with you, into those dark regions of the earth, the light and spirit of the gospel of Christ, and your heart will "burn within you," with compassion for their miserable condition, and with christian zeal in the cause of their deliverance from it. What, indeed, is there, that is low, what that is vicious, or what that is wretched, which was not comprehended in ancient, and which is not comprehended in modern, heathenism? There is nothing to be conceived either of lewdness, or of cruelty, which had not the sanctions of the religion of Greece and Rome; and which is not now a part of the idolatrous worship of the world. Nor, in any section of the world, was moral instruction ever connected with any department, or office, of heathen worship. Nay, more. This worship, with the vices that were not only incidental to it, but which found, in some of its exercises, their very spirit and life, was not left, even in the most cultivated ages of antiquity, *alone* to exert its full influence upon the multitude. Even legislators and philosophers, instead of endeavoring to instruct, and to reclaim their ignorant and corrupted countrymen, encouraged this degrading service by their teaching, required it by their laws, and sanctioned it by their examples. I ask, only, then, that the world which is without our religion, should be seen by us in the light, and considered with the sentiments, with which it was seen and considered by our Lord and his Apostles; and we shall be secure of the first element, or principle, of that spirit which will earnestly desire, and gladly seize the occasion, as widely as possible to diffuse the knowledge, and influence, of the truth as it is in Jesus.

The *second* element, or principle, of that spirit, which feels its obligation to do all that it may for the diffusion of our religion, is, *a deep and strong sense of the reality, and power, and worth of our religion; and of the inestimable blessings which it will not fail to impart to those, who shall cordially receive, and faithfully obey it.*

I have dwelt, perhaps, longer than it may be thought by many to have been necessary that I should have dwelt, on the sentiments with which our religion regards the heathen world. But I know that there are not a few, even of those who have made some progress in religious knowledge, whose opinions on this subject are unformed and unsettled; and that there are not a few also, who reason, as I think, most unjustly concerning it. I was willing, also, to detain attention for a few minutes longer than I would otherwise have done, upon the first element, or principle, of the missionary enterprise, from a conviction that, if this principle be distinctly understood, and strongly felt, a preparation will be secured for the succeeding topics of this letter. These topics I will now treat as briefly as I can.

Is our religion, then, *a reality?* Are its doctrines respecting the character and government of God, respecting the condition of man in this world, respecting our Lord Jesus Christ, and the eternal life that is beyond the grave, actually a revelation from God to us? I appeal, then, to the consciousness which the Christian has of the power, and the worth of his religion. I appeal to his experience of its purifying, its heavenly influence upon the heart that receives, and loves it, and yields to it. I appeal to his experience of its adaptation to the strongest wants of his nature; to the wants of his

immortal nature; to his experience of its power of exalting the soul above all that would degrade and debase it; of bringing man to the greatest nearness to God, to which he can be brought in this world; and of giving, even here, a foretaste of the blessedness, which it assures to its obedient believers hereafter.

Who, that thus knows the power and the worth of the religion of Christ, will not most earnestly, most solicitously desire its widest, its universal extension? We may possess knowledge, and riches, and other sources of great immediate gratification, and be strongly sensible of their worth, and yet not only not desire their diffusion, but even feel our own interest and happiness essentially depend upon the very fact of our exclusive possession of them. But so it cannot be in regard to the principles and the spirit of the religion of Christ. In each one of its principles, and in every object of it, Christianity is stamped with the character of *universality*, which belongs to no other religion; and, corresponding with this peculiarity of it, is the spirit which it awakens in its sincere believers. Christian benevolence, the love which Christianity inspires, is a principle that cannot lie inactive in the soul that receives it. It will expand itself beyond the sphere of its capacity of action. It will wish, and it will pray for, the amelioration of the suffering, to which it can extend only the emotions, and the breathings, of its compassionate desires. It will wish, and it will pray for, the universal diffusion of truth, and purity, and happiness. Nor will it evaporate in a wish; or think that its end is attained, only by a prayer for the good of all men. It will not indeed waste itself on the expanse of ignorance, and

weakness, and suffering, and sin; or spend its strength where it can impart no light, or comfort, or improvement. But, while it diffuses itself, like that subtile, elastic, all pervading fluid, which surrounds and fills our earth, and is the life of every living thing, it will ever delight to *concentrate its power;* and here, and there, and everywhere, as it may, to accomplish the greatest good of which it is capable. Christian benevolence will never hesitate upon the question, whether it *shall* act, wherever it *may* act, for the good of others. It can no more live without this action, than the selfish principle can live without action for its own indulgence. Do I, then, address those who have a christian sense of the reality, and power, and worth of our religion? With them, the knowledge of an opportunity, and the possession of the means of more widely extending it, will at once secure all that, christian earnestness, and that christian benevolence, can accomplish in this enterprise.

In thinking of the early extension of our religion, — the unexampled rapidity of its extension during the life of the Apostles; and in pursuing the inquiries, why has it not since been more widely diffused? Why has it not long ago penetrated into every region, where civil government is established, and the arts of civilized life are cultivated, and where men are qualified to weigh the evidences of its truth? and, why has it not overshadowed, and withered the superstitions, and exterminated the false religion, and the idolatries, of Turkey, of Persia, of Hindoostan, and of the vast empire of China? Why has it not yet spread through Africa? Why has it not accomplished in the islands of the Indian

ocean, and in all those of the Pacific, the good which it is said recently to have accomplished in the Society Isles?"*

In thus comparing what our religion has done, with what we are very plainly taught that it was intended to do, we too easily rest in causes of its past and present condition, which leave the blame of the narrowness of the present bounds of Christendom anywhere, but where indeed it belongs ; that is, with those who have called themselves Christians. It is said too, in our own justification, that the age of miracles has passed ; and that converts are not therefore now to be made, as they were in the days of the Apostles. And then we resort to the consideration, that there is work enough to be done at home, without going abroad to proselyte. And, if still pressed upon the subject, we ask, "where, and what, are the indications of Providence, that our labors in the work of extending our religion among the heathen

* In the year 1773, Capt. Cook estimated the number of inhabitants in the Society Islands at 200,000. The missionaries think that there must have been, at that time, at least 150,000. But in 1797, when the missionaries arrived there, the number did not exceed 20,000; and before Christianity began to exert much influence there, the number had diminished to little more than 15,000. It is believed that two thirds of the children, that were born, were sacrificed to idols; or were thrown into the sea to propitiate the sharks, which were worshipped as gods; or were buried alive. In the years 1801 and 1802, Mr John Turnbull resided at Otaheite for commercial purposes; and has since published "A Voyage round the world, in the years 1800, 1, 2, 3, and 4." Of the inhabitants of these islands, he says, "their pollution beggars all description; and my mind revolts from a recollection, which recalls so many objects of disgust and horror. Their wickedness is enough to call down the immediate judgment of heaven : and unless their manners change, I pronounce that they will not long remain in the number

will be successful ?" But I would ask any one who so reasons concerning the missionary cause, to bring home to himself the inquiry, as far as respects the intellectual and moral condition of the world, "what better indications had our Lord and his apostles of success in the work of diffusing his religion, than we now have ?" I may ask, too, even at the hazard of starting those who have not so viewed it, if our religion be not, essentially, a religion of proselytism ? Are not its designs respecting all mankind forcing themselves upon our notice, on every page of its records ? Does it offer any compromise with false religion, or with idolatry, in any of their forms ? Nay, more, I would ask, if Christianity is to be extended over the whole world, and if

of nations." *Now*, however, not less than 12,000, in these islands, can read the word of God intelligibly ; considerable portions of which have been translated into their language, printed and circulated. Three thousand children and adults are now in the school. Many are able to write, and some are considerably acquainted with arithmetic. The pleasures of the domestic circle are now known among them. Industry has increased. Drunkenness has become rare. Theft seldom occurs ; and murder is still more untrequent. The aged and infirm are kindly treated. Hospitals have been established ; and charitable societies instituted to relieve the afflicted poor. Their government is defined, and limited by a constitution ; and the king and his chiefs have power only to execute the laws. Their wars are ended, and the weapons of war are perishing. Family prayer is almost universal. Twentyeight houses of worship are opened on the Sabbath, and eighteen natives are employed as missionaries in the neighboring islands. These are facts which require no comment. It would be easy to adduce many others, in regard to these islanders, which are not less interesting. But I would rather refer the reader, who would know more of this subject, to the London Quarterly Chronicle for July and October, 1823; and to the Missionary Herald for September, 1825.

the age of miracles be gone by not to return, where is the consistency of waiting for a miraculous direction in this work, and for miraculous assistance in its execution? Shall we then wait for miraculous manifestations, to excite us to do what we may for its universal extension?

I will even proceed a step further, and ask, if we have not some advantage for the propagation of our religion, which the Apostles had not? With them, Christianity was an experiment that was yet to be tried. But we have the evidence of its truth and excellence, which is derived from the admirable institutions that have grown out of it; and which as much belong to it and depend upon it, as the branches of a vine belong to, and depend upon the stock to which they are attached. We can show, and prove, that in the degree to which it has been left to itself, unfettered by civil and ecclesiastical restrictions, it has triumphed over the strongest passions, and the most inveterate prejudices and customs; and has repressed abuses and crimes, which have been established and sanctioned by every other religion. By the knowledge, also, which it has imparted of mutual rights and duties, it has modified, and, we hesitate not to say, has improved civil government and public morals, to an extent to which no other than christian principles could have advanced them. Who that has thoroughly studied the history of our own country, has a doubt whether we owe our peculiar civil institutions to Christianity?* Nor may we alone de-

* I would refer the reader, who has not much time for inquiry on this subject, to the very able sermon, preached before the Legislature of the Commonwealth, by the Rev. Mr Dewey, of New Bedford.

fend our religion, and recommend it, by these most obvious and grand results of it. The countless associations which it has originated, for all the conceivable purposes of benevolence ; the systems of education, that are essentially christian, which are forming and advancing throughout Christendom ; the new responsibleness which it devolves upon woman, and the new rank which it has given to her ; the emancipation which it has effected of the poor, from the entailed ignorance, degradation and debasement, in which every other religion finds, and leaves them ; its efforts, and its success, in the work of abolishing slavery ; and its influence on the domestic relations, and on domestic happiness ; — these are effects of our religion, which, in proportion as they are comprehended, and are seen in their true character by the intelligent of other religions, will do much, and cannot fail to do much, for its extension.*

* " Before going to war, it is right to count the cost ; and in the conflict which Christians have begun to wage for the moral subjugation of the world, it is proper to estimate whether, with their few and scattered numbers, they can cope with the myriads of their opponents. Certainly at no former period had they such means, and such promising success, as we now have. All the ancient 'war weapons' of victory, excepting miracles, are at their disposal ; and new instruments of still greater potency, which the science of the latter days has been accumulating for a universal revolution of the mind, are ready to be brought into action, upon a scale of overpowering magnitude. Even the single resource which is lost, may yet be recompensed by equivalents ; and a substitute, in many respects, may be found for miracles. The first effect of a miracle is, to arouse the attention, and to overawe opposing prejudices. The second, to afford a proof of the truth of the religion, of which it is a sealing accompaniment. The first object may be gained by experi-

From what it has done, bad as Christendom is, we can demonstrate its adaptation to the condition, and to the wants of all men, and its tendency to an indefinite improvement of the human mind and character.

mental philosophy. As to the second, the difference in the proof of our religion, to any to whom it shall now be proposed, from its miracles, lies rather in the fact, that this proof is at the present day more circuitous, than that it is less conclusive, than it was in the days of the Apostles. Besides, the turning point of receiving Christianity, even in the apostolic age, consisted less in having seen the miracles, than in seeing their own need of a revelation, and its adaptation to the present circumstances of humanity. Moral influence has always prevailed more than supernatural influence. The generation that literally lived on miracles, and had 'angels' food' for their daily bread, perished from unbelief in the desert; while their children, brought up in the loneliness of the wilderness, far from the corruptions of the surrounding nations, were even eminent to after times, as an example of 'a right godly nation.'"

Hints on Missions, by James Douglas, Esq. pp. 22--24. This is a sensible little book; and far better worth reading, than have been many books upon the subject of missions, which have been, and are, more popular.

A friend suggests to me the expediency of remarking here, that the effect of miracles, as a means of missionary success, has been overrated; for the Apostles seem to have resorted to them only incidentally; and Rammohun Roy says, they are not of the value in the East, which many Christians are accustomed to ascribe to them. It is indeed well known, that the Hindoos boast of far more wonderful miracles, than are related by the Evangelists; and though these reputed miracles are as wonderful absurdities as were ever imposed upon human credulity, they must, and will dispose unconverted natives of India, to allow but little importance to the miracles of our religion. But converts to Christianity in that country, will obtain new sentiments of the miracles of Hindooism; and then also will they see in the miracles of the gospel much to confirm their faith, that it is, what it claims to be, a dispensation from God.

The *third*, and last element, or principle of that spirit, which feels a paramount obligation to do all that it may for the diffusion of our religion, is the feeling that God, in dispensing signal blessings to men, designs that they, whom he so distinguishes, shall be his agents in giving the widest possible extension to these blessings. In other words, *God designs that man shall be his instrument, for imparting the blessings of Christianity to man;* and he, who has the means, and the opportunities, thus to benefit his fellow creatures, will be held responsible at the bar of heaven, for the execution of the work which God thus requires of him.

That man should sympathize with man, that he should feel an interest, deep and strong, in the condition of his fellow-men; and, especially, that we should be affected, and strongly affected, by the wants and sufferings, not only of those around us, but of our whole race, I fear not to say is as much a law of our nature, as it is that we should feel a deep and strong interest in those, who are immediately connected with us, in the nearest relations of life; or, as it is, that we should love ourselves. This feeling may be, and it is, kept down within us, by the ascendant influence, which is obtained in our hearts by narrow, local, and selfish interests. It is a feeling, which many of the circumstances in our early education are suited to repress, and to enfeeble in us; and which our daily habits of business and of pleasure, as mere men of the world, may be counteracting, and restraining, and deadening within us. But there are occasions in the life of every one, whose heart has not been shut up by bands of brass, or iron, or adamant, when this feeling, chilled and dead as it may have seemed to be, is warmed into life, and puts

forth its strength, and breaks from its enclosures, and speaks in a language not to be misunderstood; at once vindicating our nature from the charge, that,

> "There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart,
> It does not feel for man;"

and demonstrating that it is the purpose of God, that man shall be his instrument for the communication of all possible blessings to man. I need not refer you to the effects, which are produced within us, while we are reading narratives of real, or imaginary scenes and circumstances of distress. These effects alone demonstrate, not only that God has made us for one another, but that, in an important sense, he has made each one of us for the whole of our species. Who, I ask, dwells upon the pages of history, merely that he may possess its facts; or simply for the mere personal uses which he may make of them? Or, who that knows the blessings of civil rights, and of civil liberty, has not felt all his indignation awakened against the despot, that has trampled upon these rights, even though ages have revolved, since the tyrant and the tyranny have passed away? And who has not felt a joy, an exultation, to be surpassed only by that of an emancipated people, when the tyrant has fallen, and when at least one well directed effort has been made in the cause of human freedom? Who, as he has pondered on the pages of history, has not gone forth with the armies, over whose dust centuries have revolved, and joined the standard of the leader whom he has chosen, and fought for the rights of man; rejoicing, or suffering, as they were obtained, or lost; filled with the interests, the hopes, the fears of the distant age, to which his existence for the

hour has been transferred ; and prepared for all the efforts and sacrifices of the cause which he has espoused, and which he believes to be the cause of truth, and right, and human happiness? Who has read of the wise, intrepid, persevering, disinterested benefactors of their age,—be that age as distant from us as it may, and has not felt that they were the glory of our race? Who has not sympathized with them in their purposes, shared their toils, triumphed in their successes, and lamented their defeats? Who has not felt, when under the influence of their examples, the true greatness and dignity of a heroic, self-denying, upright and benevolent spirit ; struggling against the difficulties that opposed it ; sacrificing its ease, its security, its peace, and all its immediate interests, for the advancement of the condition and happiness of others? And who has not felt himself to be raised in the scale of being, by the consciousness that he is united, by the bond of a common nature, with all this virtue, this greatness, this excellence?

Yes, it is not less a law of our nature, that we should go out of ourselves, that we should feel a strong interest in others, and not only in the wants and the happiness of our family, our neighborhood, our country and our age, but in those too of men in every country, and in all time, than it is that we should love ourselves. I say not, that one principle is as strong, and steady, and active at all times, or that it is as generally manifested in human conduct, as is the other. It is not. In many, it is bound in the chains of a sordid avarice. In many, it is kept in subjection by a miserable ambition, which values nothing, but as it conduces to personal dis-

tinction. And in many, it lies buried under heaps of the rubbish of cares and interests, of appetites and propensities, of prejudices and passions, not one of which has an object beyond the individual, to whom they are the chief, and perhaps the only good of life. But the principle of sympathy, — of sympathy, I mean, with the cause of human nature, of human good and happiness,— dead and buried as it sometimes seems to be, does also sometimes rise, and manifest itself; and, with an electric influence, at once animate, and give new vigor, to thousands, and millions. How has the thrill of its power been felt, in the cause of the abolition of the slave trade? How was it felt, when the first struggles of the Greeks for freedom were published throughout Christendom? How was it felt, when it was thought that the sun of liberty had broken through the clouds, which, for centuries, had covered Spain; and that a new day was about to open upon that dark spot of the earth? And how was it felt, when we were assured that one and another of the oppressed nations of South America had conquered, had triumphed, had secured a government of its choice, a constitution, equal laws, independence? And who, that has tasted the blessings, and that knows the happiness of civil liberty, does not desire, and will not pray, that it may be universal? Who would not rejoice to hear, that despotism is everywhere at an end? Who would not contribute what he can, to the cause of the universal emancipation of our race, from the injustice and cruelty, the degradation and misery, of civil tyranny?—And is civil freedom, or are civil rights and privileges, so great a boon, that, merely to name them, is to kindle desire in every heart, that they may

be universal? And is the sympathy that is thus excited, one of the provisions of God, for the advancement of the great cause of civil liberty throughout the world? What, then, should be our sympathy in the cause of religion; of religious liberty; of the rescue of man from the slavery of a superstition, a thousand times more debasing than is any civil bondage; in the cause of bringing men to the liberty, the exaltation of condition, and the happiness, of the sons of God?

Christians, let us feel the value of our privileges, and the greatness of our responsibility for them. God has committed them to us for our own improvement, and as means of our own salvation. But is it not also his will, that we should be his instruments for the improvement and the salvation of our fellow-men? How, think you, is our religion to be extended through the world, but by the christian earnestness, and the christian benevolence of those, who feel its reality, its worth, and its power; and the greatness of the blessings which it will impart to those who receive it? We believe, indeed, that it ever has been, that it is, and that it will be, in the care of him, who sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. But our Lord committed it to the immediate charge of his apostles; and they have left it — to those who shall believe in it. God will honor us as his agents, in the work of imparting to all the greatest of all his blessings. Is proof of the principle demanded? I will ask, why has God, in such diversified measures, allotted to us our talents, and our capacities? Why has he appointed such a diversity in the condition of men? Why has he connected us in bonds of families, of neighborhoods, and of communi-

ties? And why has he subjected all to so many weaknesses, and exposures, and wants, and sufferings? No one will doubt, whether one purpose of these ordinations of his providence is, the accomplishment, by the instrumentality of man, of his designs of benevolence towards man. And is it less clearly God's design, that we should extend, as far as we may, the bread of life, and the waters of life, to those who are suffering from the want of them, than it is that we should give of our bread to the hungry, or relieve the distress which we have the means and opportunity of relieving?

Fellow-christians, let us feel that we are to give account to God, for the use which we make of our powers of mind and of body, of our property, of our influence, and of every means which we have of being good, *by doing good.* And if, where much has been given, much will be required, will not much be demanded from us, and may not much be most justly demanded, in return for the most precious of God's gifts to us, the religion of his Son? Admit that the heathens are safe, as far as that idolatry is concerned, the evil of which they know not. The great question to engage our attention is, are *we safe*, while we possess the means of their instruction, their reformation, and their best happiness, and yet fail to employ them to the purposes, for which God has entrusted us with them? Are we safe, if this talent shall be kept by us, laid up in a napkin? Can we render our account with joy at the bar of heaven, if, having freely received this unspeakable gift, we have cared nothing for the condition of those who have it not; and have done nothing, that they may be partakers with us of the salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with everlasting glory?

Suffer me here to say, that I fear we do not think enough of the importance of *prayer*, in this, as well as in all our great and important enterprises. God wills that religious truth, like other truth, should be extended by human agency. But not by an independent agency of man. We are, in this great concern, to "be workers together with God;" and while our wills, and affections, and labors, are to be given to the service, we are "in all our ways to acknowledge Him, that he may direct our steps." Before our Lord elected his apostles, he was all night in prayer to God; and we see his apostles relying not more on their miraculous powers, than on their prayers, for the cooperation of God in their work. Let us not, then, indulge narrow views of our relation to God; of the intimacy of the communion which we may hold with him; and of the influence which may be exerted by God upon us, and by God, in cooperation with us, in perfect consistency with our own moral freedom. Let us, more than we have done, realize what we ask of God, when we pray, "may thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven!"

We live in a time, peculiarly favorable to every attempt that can be made for human improvement and happiness. Nor is it alone in those departments, to which science with her new and wonderful discoveries, has extended her influence, that we find a new spirit of excitement, and of enterprise. The fact, that the long known mechanic powers are, of late, found to possess capacities, very far beyond all the uses to which they had been applied; and the fact too, not less interesting and important, of the discovery of a new mechanical agent, which may be applied alike to works the most

simple, and the most complex — to the greatest and grandest operations, and to those which are the most minute; have given an impulse to inquiry, and to the spirit of discovery, and effort, in every department of human knowledge. The idea is awakened, and is abroad, that nothing is to be deemed impracticable, till it has been fairly tried ; and that no exertion for an object is to be relaxed, while any means remain, which may be employed for its attainment. It is felt, that there may be new applications of the known capacities of human nature, not yet hinted at in any of our systems of mental philosophy ; and even that new moral agents may be discovered, which may be employed to accomplish in the moral world changes and improvements, as great as have been extended to the various departments of art, by the power of a new physical agent. In Europe, and in our own country, great are the changes that have been accomplished, within the last fifty years, by the systems of education, which have been devised and adopted, and which are widely extending ; by the multiplication of books, which grows with the multiplication of readers ; by the new views which have been opened, and are everywhere obtaining increased and increasing attention ; of religious liberty, and of religious rights ; and which are awakening new convictions, and new interests, and are giving a new impulse to thought and action. Great are the changes of opinion, which are spreading, and which will continue to spread, through the nations, of the nature and ends of civil government ; of the *rights* of the *ruled*, and of the duty and accountableness of rulers. And, I am happy to say, that, compared with any former time since the days of

the Apostles, great, throughout Christendom, is the revolution, that has been produced in opinion and in feeling, concerning the relation of man to man; and concerning our capacity, and obligation, to extend to others the blessings, with which God in his mercy has distinguished us, in the religion which he has given us by his Son.

But the principle which, more than any other, has given life, and efficiency to our systems of education, which has peculiarly multiplied and extended books, and which has spread widely the new sentiments, that have obtained of religious liberty, and of religious rights; the principle, which has given diffusion to the new views which are received of the nature and ends of civil government, and which has attempted, and done, what has never before been done, for the universal extension of our religion, is, *the principle of voluntary association.* And if we may infer what it may do, from what it has done, where shall we fix the limits of its power, and of its consequences? Look only to the Bible societies, the anti-slavery societies, the peace societies, and the religious missionary societies of England and of America, and say, what is to arrest their progress, and their effects? Opinion has been called the lever, by which society is now moved, and its vast operations are directed, and controled. But I should rather call it the ground on which the lever is fixed, by which the world is moved. The mighty agent, by which those changes have been accomplished, which are every day exciting new admiration, and new expectations concerning the moral and the political condition of the world, is, the power of voluntary association. It is a power,

which, like knowledge, and like wealth, may be made as conducive to evil as to good. But let all the virtuous and the wise feel its importance, and faithfully avail themselves of it, and employ it with the calm, and steady, and persevering zeal which should characterize Christians; and, with God's blessing on the work, it will not long be doubtful to any mind, whether indeed the enterprise be feasible, of *the conversion of the world.*

I will only add my hearty good wishes for the prosperity of your Association; and my hope that, while we are aiming at the advancement of our religion *at home*, we may all be excited to do what we can, to bring "every knee to bow in the name of Jesus, and every tongue to confess him to be Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

With great respect and affection,

I am truly yours,

JOSEPH TUCKERMAN.'

Chelsea, June 8th, 1826.

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THE

UNITARIAN'S ANSWER.

It was a recommendation of Peter, to the early Christians, that they should be ready always to give an answer to every man that asked them a reason of the hope that was in them: that is to say, that they should be prepared to meet the questions and objections of those around them; to assign the grounds or reasons of their belief and hope in Christianity; and not only so, but to be familiar with these reasons — to "be *ready always*" to give them to every objector, that design or casualty might throw in their way. Placed as those of us in the community, who embrace the system of Unitarian Christianity, are, in a situation not altogether dissimilar to that of the early Christians; suffering the lot that has uniformly attended all the advocates of progress and reform, in every age of the world; beset, as it is natural we should be, with inquiries, and suspicions, and misapprehensions and misrepresentations also; assailed, as is no less natural, by the admonitions of the weak, though well meaning, by the confidence of the prejudiced, and by the strong arguments of the majority, we need the same fami-

liar acquaintance with our principles and the grounds of them, the same ready preparation for the difficulties of the inquiring, and the objections of the adversaries, that was recommended to the early Christians. And, in order to this preparation, we need often, and in detail, to contemplate the elements and evidences of our faith. We have the more need to do this, because our principles have not, like the doctrines of the popular theology, been inculcated upon us in catechisms ; they have not been frequently exhibited in sermons ; they have not been interwoven with the mass of what is called religious reading. The creeds of Orthodoxy have been our teachers, in the nursery, the school, the sanctuary, and the closet. It is the distinction of our faith from the Orthodox, that is, the general faith, that it has made its way through all the barriers and defences of prejudice and authority. It is the distinction of our preaching, in general, that confident as we are in the natural and unaided strength of the simple doctrine we profess, mainly concerned about what is spiritual and practical in religion, — about the application and adaptation of religion to the character and wants of society, — we have been less inclined to engage in the matters of speculative and unfruitful controversy. This, though it evinces the justice and the real strength of our cause, does not favor the proper understanding of it.

It is the object, therefore, of the following tract, to present a brief summary of plain reasons, such as plain men may comprehend themselves, and may offer to others, for the faith that we have in the general system of Unitarianism, and for our preference of it over all other systems. These reasons may all be reduced under two general

heads ; viz. that the system which we have embraced is in our judgment, more TRUE and more USEFUL, than the systems which prevail around us.

I. The first and great reason, then, why we value the Unitarian system of belief, is, that in our apprehension it is TRUER than any other system.

The doctrine of the simple unity of God, which most distinctively separates our views from the views of other Christians, we are persuaded, is most accordant with Scripture and most agreeable to reason. We do not deny that other Christians maintain the unity of God, but we think they must allow that it is in their view, a modified, complex unity, made up of parts, consisting of persons, divided according to the actual conceptions of its defenders, into three individual minds. We say according to their *actual conceptions* so divided. For, we desire our Orthodox brethren to carry back their thoughts to the time previous to the advent of Jesus Christ upon the earth. And furthermore, in regard to this, we desire them to consider, not their language only, but their actual thoughts. Here is represented, according to their views, God the Father sending God the Son into the world. Now, we say, that in this representation, they must unavoidably conceive of two minds, two agents, two beings. He that *sends* cannot be he that is *sent*. He that *commands* cannot be he who *obeys*. Let them not say, that this is a matter above their comprehension. They do, to a certain extent, bring it within their comprehension. They do actually and necessarily conceive of two distinct minds in this transaction, and thus they do violate the simple unity of God, and in fact, every

other conceivable unity of an intelligent being. We wonder not that the missionary in Calcutta, who has lately embraced Unitarian Christianity, *should* have been staggered, as he tells us he was, by the answers and evasions of the Hindoo idolators. For what did they say to him? "Your Trinity as much violates the Unity of God as our Idolatry; your worshiping three persons in the Godhead is as inconsistent with the doctrine of one God, as our worshiping three hundred millions. Nor do our sacred books any more fail to teach the unity than yours, nor are they any more at variance with our practices. For it is as much a departure from the Unity to worship three beings, as to worship thirty, or three millions. It is not the multiplication, but the bare diversity of objects of worship, that constitutes polytheism." And we are compelled to say, with no desire of giving provocation, but in calm sincerity, that we see not what the Trinitarian can reply to this argument.

But although the popular doctrine of the trinity seems to us to be encumbered with insuperable difficulties, we would believe in it, or would believe in some kind of trinity, in the modal or Sabellian form of it — that is, one God acting in three characters, if we could find any evidence or trace of it in the Scriptures. But it is in the scriptures, that we find everywhere, the most irresistible arguments for the Unitarian views of this subject; and these arguments in the most unobjectionable form.

1. For, first, it is the *simple* doctrine of the Bible. God is one; — one Being, one Mind, one Ruler, "one King of kings and Lord of lords, the blessed and *only* Potentate," "the *only* wise God," "the *only* true God," "one God the Father" "the God of our Lord Jesus

Christ." "To us there is but *one* God, *the Father*,—and one Lord Jesus Christ." For although "there are gods many, and lords many," yet, "the Lord *our* God is *one* Lord." "There is none other God but He"—"there is no God with Him." Now, if we are not to receive this simply as it is said; if the unity of God may consist with such a strange and unaccountable multiplication of his being as the popular theology teaches; if his unity may be something so different from the natural and unavoidable sense of it, which this language conveys how do we know but his justice and mercy differ as widely from the simple representations of Scripture? And what security can we feel that all our knowledge of God's attributes and ways may not be just as far from the truth? What can save us from a skepticism that will be as chilling to devotion as the doctrine of the trinity is perplexing to it? These questions seem to us to have a great weight, and we desire that their importance may be apprehended. We read in the scriptures that *God is good*. But how do we know, admitting the trinitarian latitude of interpetation, how do we know that we understand what this means? If we do not interpret this language simply; if we deviate from the pervading, the constitutional sense which men have of goodness; if goodness in God may be as different from men's natural conceptions of it, as "three" is from "one," where, we ask, are the principles of piety? where are the exercises of devotion? We should tremble, indeed, if the same liberty were taken with the scriptural account of the *moral perfections* of God, as is taken with the far more abstruse and difficult subject of his metaphysical nature and mode of existence.

Yet we have reason to think that the same liberty *is* taken. We ask if it is not becoming more and more common amongst the most intelligent trinitarians to say, that we have no idea of goodness in God but as *something* which does us good, that we have no proper idea of it as a moral quality, that his goodness may, not only in degree, but *in kind*, very widely differ from the best conceptions we can form of it? At any rate, with regard to the general fact, we think that we need not ask. We are deeply and painfully impressed with the conviction, that the prevailing representations of God are far and wide from the simple, scriptural views of his benevolent and paternal character. On this subject we know it is difficult to speak without giving offence, and we would gladly avoid it; but we do solemnly believe, and we must assert our belief, and might do so, "even weeping," that in more than half the pulpits of this land, representations of God are constantly made;—or to be more explicit, that every time the doctrines of election and reprobation, of man's native depravity and impotence, and helpless exposure in consequence to eternal tórments,—that every time these doctrines are preached, there is given a representation of God, which every generous and honorable man in the community would shudder to have applied to himself!

The observations we have made to this point; *it is dangerous to depart from the simple and rational sense of Scripture.* The doctrine, that we know nothing of God's goodness, that it is a "somewhat," as undefinable as the trinity itself, (a legitimate consequence, let it be remembered, of trinitarian reasonings,) the doctrine that his goodness may differ as much from all our natural, affec-

tionate, and reverent conceptions of it, as a trinity does from unity, strikes fatally to the very heart of devotion. If this be true, we may as well resort to the Athenian altar, for truly we worship an "UNKNOWN GOD!"

2. But, we say again, that Unitarianism is the *unembarrassed* doctrine of the scriptures. We find no difficulty in believing that the Father is the Supreme and only God, and that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. But the moment we take up the trinitarian hypothesis, we are perplexed and troubled on every side. We are not only perplexed by the general strain of the Scriptures, but we are confounded by the very passages that are brought to support it. If we could find one text that plainly told us that *God exists in three persons*, that would relieve us. But the text in John, concerning "the three that bear record in heaven," the only one that has any pretension to be of this character, is now set aside by the consent of the learned of all parties as an interpolation; that is, a passage introduced by the fraud or negligence of transcribers, in some former age, when copies of the Bible were multiplied only by writing. It is remarkable, we may add in passing, that two other passages commonly brought to support the trinity, and two of the most important, are very generally, by the learned, admitted to have suffered injury from the same cause, viz.; 1 Tim. iii. 16, "God was manifest," which should be read, "he who was manifest in the flesh, was justified," &c, and Acts, xx. 28, "to feed the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood," which should be read —"to feed the church of the Lord," &c. On these points, it is true, that common Christians cannot judge for themselves, but when many learned Trinitarians concur in

giving up these passages, there is certainly a strong presumption against them. And then, as to the few remaining proof texts, if we held the trinity, they would certainly embarrass more than they would satisfy us. For suppose that in the beginning of John's gospel, the "Word" spoken of, was Jesus Christ, and not as we believe, a mere divine attribute, the wisdom or power of God, which is afterwards said to have been "made flesh;" that is, manifested in the person of Jesus; suppose, which we do not admit, that in the first five verses of John, our Saviour is personally represented by the Logos, how strange and perplexing would the language be! In the beginning there was a being, and this being was *with* God, and this being *was* God. How is it possible that a being who was *with* God could be God himself? Refer now to the passage in the 1st of Hebrews, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," yet immediately after; it is said, "therefore God, even *thy* God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above *thy fellows*." If Jesus *is* God, yet here is another God, represented as superior to him, as *his* God, as anointing him, and placing him above his fellows or associates! Can a being inferior, subject, anointed by God, and having equals and associates, possibly be regarded as the Supreme God? Look, again, at the text, Rom. ix. 5; "Of whom, as concerning the flesh," that is, by lineage, "Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." That is to say, Christ was of Jewish descent; and what follows? Is it credible that Paul meant to say, that a being who was of Jewish descent, was the Supreme God? that a long line of Jewish genealogy was terminated by the Almighty Author and Sovereign of the universe? Could he bring these ideas into

the same sentence, could he utter them in the same breath, without experiencing the most overwhelming horror, and awakening in others, not only the utmost horror, but the most absolute incredulity? We believe, indeed, that the passage is susceptible of another translation ;* and to some other translation we are urged, or else to the entire suspension of our judgment, by the monstrous incongruities and contradictions of the popular explanation. On the whole, we think, it has been justly said that the doctrine of the trinity is overthrown by the very texts that are brought to support it. Instead of being promoted, it is inextricably embarrassed, by the very arguments that are used to set it forth.

3. We find another general reason for embracing the contrary doctrine — the doctrine of the simple unity of God, of the supremacy of the Father, and the inferiority of Jesus, in the fact, that it is the *current* doctrine of scripture.

Reference has been made, in an earlier part of this essay, to the period of time previous to the advent of our Saviour, in order to free the subject from the obscurity that is thrown over it by the doctrine of the incarnation.

* Of whom by lineage Christ came ; God, who is over all, — or He, who is over all God, — i. e. He who is the Supreme God, be blessed for ever. The natural construction of the Greek of this passage, if it does not require, at least does not forbid the rendering here given. It is a very strong circumstance that the early Fathers of the Church never applied this language to our Saviour ; nay, some of them expressly forbade such an application, considering the title " God over all," or the Supreme God, as appropriate to the Father alone. Have we more accurate copies of the Scriptures in these days, or do we understand Greek better ?

But, in reality, there is the same argument against the trinity in everything which we are taught concerning Jesus Christ during his abode on earth. A plain and unprejudiced reader of the New Testament, we are persuaded, would never think of his being God. The Jews did not, except in pretence; and the ground of that pretence was not allowed, but altogether denied and refuted by our Saviour. (See the 10th chapter of John.) We are persuaded, moreover, that the disciples never thought of him as God. For it is incredible that there could have been that free play of their thoughts and passions, which is indicated in the evangelical narrative, that they could have indulged in familiar conversation, in petty disputes, in their questionings and doubts, and the contentions of worldly ambition, if they had felt themselves to be in the personal and visible presence of the infinite God.

Nor, surely, is this at all surprising, but perfectly natural. Jesus constantly spoke of himself as inferior to God; constantly averred, that he received all his power, authority, and doctrine from God. He testified his dependence on the Father by habitual prayer, expressly acknowledged that he could do nothing of himself, and on one occasion, solemnly referring to a future and momentous event, declared, that "of that day and hour he knew nothing," that it was inscrutably hidden in the counsels of God alone. Now, besides the simple and clear inference from all this, there is a dilemma for the Trinitarian, from which nothing can extricate him, but an impeachment of the veracity of Jesus. Either our Saviour did know of the event in question, either he did possess power and authority to do all things of himself,

or he did not. If he did not he was not God. If he did possess the knowledge or power in question, he acted the part of a deceiver. Surely, no Christian will hesitate which of these to believe.

On this head of the *prevailing* sense of Scripture, we will only add a passage from a work lately published in England, and addressed to Bishop Burgess.

"And now, my lord, in all cases in which any book may be considered as having passages not distinctly intelligible, or some seemingly opposed to others, is it not to the *general sense* we are to look ? In such cases, can human wisdom devise a more equitable or judicious proceeding, to come at the true import, than a candid reference to the *general tenor ?* Grant but this fair and necessary reasoning, and it goes at once to a decision of the question ; for there is such an overwhelming mass of testimony in our favor, as must surprise even those who read their Bible, but have never seen the passages collected together and presented in one view, many of them in terms as clear and explicit as language can furnish, and some apparently so strongly pointed *against* a plurality of persons, each truly God, that had they been given expressly to counteract such a doctrine, they could scarcely have been given in words more satisfactory.

" I will offer here a summary of these texts, taken from that intelligent work, Grundy's Lectures. In the work itself they may all be seen at full length.

" Those passages in the New Testament, in which the FATHER is styled ONE, or ONLY GOD, are in number 17.

" Those passages where he is styled GOD, *absolutely*, by way of *eminence* and *supremacy*, are in number 320.

"Those passages where he is styled GOD, with *peculiarly high titles and epithets*, or *attributes*, are in number 105.

"Those passages wherein it is declared that *all prayers and praises* ought to be offered to HIM, and that everything ought to be ultimately directed to HIS *honor and glory*, are in number 90.

"Passages wherein the SON is declared, positively, and by the clearest implication, to be SUBORDINATE TO THE FATHER, *deriving his being from Him, receiving from Him his divine power*, and *acting in all things wholly according to the will of the Father*, are in number above 300.

"Of 1300 passages in the New Testament, wherein the word God is mentioned, not one of them necessarily implies a plurality of persons."

"To which may be added about 2000 passages in the Old Testament, in which the unity of God is either positively expressed or evidently implied.

"Is it not almost incredible that, in this amazing and endless controversy, nearly all the testimony which is *direct* and intelligible, should appear to stand on one side only? What a wonder-working power is infatuation, when it can drive men forward against such an overwhelming superiority of evidence and reasoning as may be brought in support of the unity of God!"

We must endeavor as briefly as possible, to state two or three further considerations, without attempting to exhaust the subject. Strong as we think the argument is, derived from the simple, unembarrassed, and pervading sense of Scripture; multiplied as the passages which make for our doctrine are, even to hundreds and thousands, yet we find still urged against us a few texts, a very few in the comparison, which it is said, speak another language. And the reasoning by which these few passages are still supported is this, that one declaration of

God, — as if that was not the very matter in question,— that one declaration of God is as good as many ; or, to state the principle nakedly, that one text for a doctrine as good as a thousand against it ! We are surprised to see this principle brought forward, by those who allow that the Bible should be interpreted as other books are. We think its fallacy may be made to appear by any one or two of a hundred examples that might be easily quoted. By this rule, anything could be proved from the Scriptures. Thus, it might be proved according to the doctrines of one class of atheistical philosophers, that Christians, good men, in common with all things else, are only component parts of the one divinity ; and Christians as well as their Master, should be deified ; for they are said to be "*partakers* of the divine nature ;" and Paul, addressing them says, "ye have an unction from the Holy One, and *know all things ;*" that is, literally, ye are omniscient. Again, Anthropomorphism, or the doctrine that God has a corporeal nature, a doctrine that once had its advocates, has much stronger support from the Scriptures, than the trinity. For what is more common in the Bible than the representation of God as seeing, hearing, walking, descending, ascending ? Nor would this, like the trinity, contradict other passages of Scripture. It would not contradict the assertion, that "God is a spirit ;" for *man* is composed of a body and a spirit. And yet this doctrine is rejected by all Christians, by Trinitarian Christians, too, *on the bare presumption of reason !*

Another consideration is founded on the first chapter of Ephesians ; and we desire every believer in the trinity seriously to weigh it. Jesus Christ is there represented,

as being "*far above all principality, and power, and might, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come*;" as being "*Head over all things, having all things under his feet, and* FILLING ALL IN ALL." Now we say, that there is no stronger language descriptive of the dignity and greatness of Jesus in the New Testament. Why, then, is not this language adduced in the controversy? Why is it not cited over and over again, as decisive? Let the reason be well considered. It is because it is said, that God "*set him*" in this elevated situation, and "*gave him*" all this greatness. And the observation we have to make is this. *If all this description may be applied to Jesus* IN AN INFERIOR CHARACTER, *then any description in the Bible may; if this language does not prove him to be God, no language can.* Let a parallel passage in the 1st of Colossians be referred to, and it will be seen that our Saviour's *creating all things*, whatever it may mean, is included in a catalogue of similar distinctions, which "IT PLEASED THE FATHER should dwell" in him.

But enough has been said, though not the half that might be said, on this doctrine of the trinity; a doctrine, as we believe, unknown to the apostles, introduced by the Platonizing Fathers of the fourth century, but ill received by the body of Christians then, and variously, and at best imperfectly held by the body of Christians ever since.

The language referred to in Ephesians and Colossians, we may add, in leaving the subject, well expresses our views of the pre-eminence of Jesus. We regard him as standing at the head of the moral creation on earth; as

bearing a most interesting relation to the whole human race, as worthy of the admiration, the gratitude, and affection of every human being. It is with reference and with declared restriction to the church, that he is said to be above all things, above all principality and power, and every name that is named; that it is said, that by him were all things created, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist; all things, that is, in the sense of the text, all things in the church; for it is immediately added, "he is the head of the body, the church;" and all this, "because it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" not all the fulness of uncreated power and glory; this is at war with the whole passage; but all that was necessary to him as the Saviour of the world, as the head of the church. The *Church* is declared to be "the *fulness* of him that filleth all things."

The greatness of Jesus Christ, then, we conceive to be a *moral* and *official* greatness. It does not depend on his metaphysical nature, on the precise rank he holds in the scale of being, on the exact degree of his power. Of these we are not informed, and they could not be the objects of our affection, if we were. All this seems to us unscriptural and unprofitable abstraction concerning the glory of Jesus. It does not depend, either, upon his having two natures. Of this union of natures, there is not a word in the New Testament. Neither does his greatness depend on the time when he began to exist. It is official. It is his greatness as a Saviour, a greatness, not of age, but of office. If God has been pleased to appoint Jesus to be our Saviour, shall we demand before we can receive him, to know how long he has exist-

ed? Shall we insist that he ought to have lived for ages before, to be qualified for the work? We might do so, but it would be bold presumption. From the stones, God could raise up children to Abraham; and from the dust, he could raise up a Saviour. Suppose, we need not enter upon the question, but suppose that his existence *did* commence with his birth; he might be none the less invested with all needful power. It would not follow by any means, that he was a *mere* man. It would be still true, and it is the belief of all, that he possessed super-human power, holiness, and authority, that he was unlike all other beings in his union with God, in his office and influence; that he had the spirit of God without measure, and that the fulness of divinity dwelt in him. This is not, and cannot be a *merely* human being; and we know of no one among us who believes him to be a *mere* man. Besides; if we *had* settled all these abstract questions, of what use would it be to us? Our main concern is, not how long he has existed; not how many natures he has; not what he is abstractly, but what he is to us? And to us he is a gracious and a sufficient Redeemer. To us he has that name, which is indeed above every name — Jesus the Saviour. To us he is Master and Head. To us he filleth all in all — he fills our souls with knowledge and peace, and satisfying good — with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

But from this delightful and interesting view of Jesus as our Saviour, we are called back to the region of cold abstraction concerning him, to be reminded of a certain theoretical, and as it seems to us, most gratuitous distinction. It is said then, that although in his official

character Jesus *is* inferior, yet he is not in his real character; that he has veiled his divinity in humanity; that although originally and truly God, he condescends in the work of mediation and redemption, to act a part subordinate to God. With regard to this distinction we are almost tempted to reply to our opponents — be it so. Receive Jesus Christ then in the character in which he is presented to you. Let questions about his original, metaphysical nature be laid to rest. They are not of the Bible. Think of Jesus as your Saviour. Learn of him as your Teacher. Obey him as your Master. Imitate him as your Example. Love him as your gracious Friend, and Benefactor and Lord. Receive him as the Son of God. Fill your minds with the loveliness and grandeur of his character, as the brightest Image of God, the Representative of his authority, the Messenger of his mercy, the dying Saviour, the triumphant restorer, the light, life, and salvation of dying and guilty men. Fulfil the purpose of his death, and the duty of honoring him, by cultivating his mild, pure, forbearing, and charitable temper of mind. Do this, and we have no controversy with you.

But we will not evade the objection, though we might be willing for his own benefit, to compromise with the objector. You say then, that Jesus is really equal with God, though officially inferior; that his office is not his glory, but his humiliation. But where, let us ask, were you taught this distinction? Where did you find this theory about his personal equality, and official inferiority? Surely it is not pointed out in the Scriptures. On the contrary, is it not the current language of the New Testament, that

the Father, instead of degrading, *put honor* on the Son, *by the office he sustained, by the works he performed, by the influence he exerted?* "Him hath God *exalted* by his right hand, to be a Prince and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins." In the universal veneration that should be paid to Jesus as the Saviour of men, we are taught that "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name." But there is a very remarkable passage of Scripture that puts this subject beyond all question. It is that passage in the fifteenth chapter of the 1st Corinthians, which speaks of the termination of the kingdom and office of our Saviour; and when, according to the theory above stated, we expect of course, to hear that he rises to that dignity, from which he descended to perform the work of a mediator. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. —And when all things are subdued under him, then shall the Son also himself be subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." Here, then, at the very moment when, according to the objection, we expect to hear that Jesus rises to his primeval dignity as God, behold he becomes subject to his Father, that God, the only God whom the Scriptures know, might be all in all. Thus it appears, then, the Father gave to Jesus all the dignity, power, and authority which he possessed, who in the end will resign them; and not only so, but will himself be subject to the Supreme and Only God.

To us, with our short-sighted views, all things relating to the salvation of this world, may seem to be something vast and almost infinite — may seem to embrace the dominion of a God. But let us remember, that the empire and the majesty of Heaven are not *so* bounded. Let us raise our thoughts to those worlds on worlds, that rise and extend, and spread to infinitude,— through regions where neither the eye nor the thought of man has ever wandered. Let us think of the eighty millions of suns which modern astronomy has brought to our view — eighty millions of suns with all their systems. Let us remember that all this too may be but one portion, and a little portion, of the ways in which the Almighty travels in the greatness of his power. At the head of this boundless dominion of worlds on worlds, and systems on systems, and universe upon universe, sits and reigns the Omnipotent, the Infinite God. Yet from this height of his dwelling-place, does he descend to behold the things that are done upon earth. He regards our wants and weaknesses; He takes account of our sorrows; He has made provision for the great, the spiritual welfare of our immortal being. In this province of his empire, he has raised up one to be our Helper and Saviour, our Teacher and Guide, our Mediator and Comforter, our Lawgiver and Judge. He has made his precepts our law; his character our pattern; his loveliness our attraction to virtue; his sufferings our salvation; his death our life; his resurrection our pledge of immortality. He hath made Jesus, who was crucified, both Christ and Lord. He hath made his dominion universal, and his influence divine. By him, God made all these things; by him,

he framed the system of the church ; by him, it consists. Jesus is the bond of its union. He is the head of its members. He empowered the apostles to instruct, to regulate, to form the church. All things are put under his feet. "But *it is manifest* that HE is excepted that did put all things under him. And when all things are subdued under him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that did put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

Such are the views, which we entertain of the greatness of Jesus. And they warrant us in the free use of the most exalted language, that the Scriptures ever apply to him, and they more than justify us in a devoted and ever growing attachment to him. And most earnestly do we wish that both Trinitarians and ourselves, laying aside our useless disputes, may advance far beyond our present attainments, in the knowledge and love of him. We believe it is very possible to contend much for his divinity, and yet to feel little of his excellence ; and for ourselves, far from maintaining that we apprehend all the glory and beauty of his character, we would rather exhort one another to grow in that spirituality and purity of mind, which will enable us more fully to appreciate the dignity and excellence of our Saviour, and more heartily to commune and sympathize with him, in all his generous and blessed instructions, examples, and sacrifices.

We must now advert, though briefly, to two or three other doctrines, in regard to which we consider ourselves as holding a truer faith. The *atonement* is one of these. The death of Jesus Christ and its connexion with our

welfare, is a subject which has always interested, and often perplexed the minds of Christians. And to us it appears that the general mind has been greatly misled on this subject. It has been misled in a way of which there are many examples in every department of human inquiry, by being directed too much to a single point. There has been a desire to simplify the subject. One class of passages, relating to the death of Christ, seems to have engrossed the whole attention. All the reasons for this event has been resolved into the single consideration of it, as *sacrificial*, with, at the same time, a sufficiently vague and wavering conception of what is meant by a sacrifice or atonement, as applied to the death of Jesus. Now, we think, it will appear, that several views are to be taken of this event, and several reasons assigned for it.

There is another respect, we think, in which the general mind has been misdirected. The great object of inquiry has been to ascertain what effect the sufferings of Christ had *upon God* and his government,— an inquiry, the propriety of which we could wish might be well pondered !--rather than to ascertain the effect they should have *upon man* and his conduct. Indeed, the whole form and procedure of the investigation seems to us to have been too theoretical, too presumptuous, and to have savored too little of the simplicity of Christ. It has been common, in the systems and sermons of the Orthodox, to introduce the subject with reasonings like these; "God gave to man a law. Man violated this law, and subjected himself to its penalty. It became necessary, therefore, that this penalty should be visited upon the

transgressor, or upon his substitute ; or at least, that something *equivalent* should be endured by some one. Without this, (it is confidently pronounced,) God *could not,* in consistency with his character and government, forgive the sinner. There was an exigency (it is said) in the divine administration, and it demanded such an expedient as the atonement. Nothing but atoning blood could satisfy divine justice, and work out salvation for the guilty !" Now we cannot help asking those, who use such language as this, if they remember that they are talking about an infinite government and an infinite God? if they consider what they say, and whereof they affirm, when they thus limit the Almighty with declarations of what he cannot do and what he must do ? Surely, this is no subject for man to frame theories upon, and to lay down his propositions and to draw out his inferences. We put all speculations and presumptions aside, then, and taking the Scriptures in our hand, we simply ask, what did God design to accomplish by the death of Jesus Christ ? and how does this solemn event fulfil this design, whatever it be ?

First, what was the design for which Jesus suffered ? The answer that pervades the whole New Testament, is this ; *He suffered in order to deliver us from sin.* The design was moral and spiritual ; was, in other words, the purity and happiness of man. What the ancient law cannot do, God designed to accomplish " by the offering of his Son, even *that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.*" Rom. viii. 3, 4. Not a word is here said or anywhere else, of the sufferings of Christ inclining or enabling God

to forgive, or of their rendering it consistent with the divine character or government to forgive sinners. "Christ died for all, that they which live, *should henceforth not live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again*," 2 Cor. v. 15 — i. e. that they should live in obedience to his precepts. "He gave himself for us, *that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father*," Gal. i. 4. "He gave himself for us, *that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*," Titus ii. 14. "Ye were not redeemed," says Peter, "with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ; as of a lamb without blemish and without spot;" but from what redeemed? "*from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers*," 1 Pet. i. 18. These passages directly and with remarkable emphasis, declare the moral, the saving purpose of the sufferings of Christ.

The same purpose appears indirectly and with more or less clearness, in all the other passages of the New Testament that relate to the subject. For; are we said to be "reconciled to God by the death of his Son," Rom. v. 10; to be "made nigh by the blood of Christ," Eph. ii. 13; "reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death;" — how can this be, but through our becoming "*holy and unblamable and unreprovable in the sight of God?*" Col. i. 21, 22. What *is* reconciliation to God, but love, submission, obedience to him? If we are reconciled to God by the death of his Son, the very meaning of this declaration is, that we are by this

means brought to love him, to confide in him, to become his friends and children.

In fine; if we are said, through the death of Christ, to obtain forgiveness, future happiness, the escape from future misery, are not these, too, indissolubly connected with virtue? are they not the direct and unavoidable consequence of repentance and holiness? Is it conceivable or possible that an humble and devout mind should want the forgiveness of God, or fail of happiness? No; humility and devotion are forgiveness, and peace, and blessedness, to him who possesses them. The removal of sin is, by the very constitution of our nature, the removal of all the essential, the intrinsic unhappiness it occasions. The question, whether sin could be forgiven on bare repentance, it seems to us, could never be asked, if the terms of it were thoroughly understood. The case is not a supposable one, that a being, filled with the love of God, with reverence, and humility, and gratitude, could be the object of God's abhorrence; that such a one in all the fervors of devotion and virtue, could be unhappy, the unforgiven child of wrath and perdition! — The grand and leading purpose of the death of Christ, therefore, was, to promote our virtue and piety, and in this way our forgiveness and everlasting happiness. This is the burden of the christian doctrine on this subject. This is all that we need to understand or experience. This is what is fundamental, what is essential in the doctrine. If the cross of Christ has power to subdue our pride, our impatience, our worldliness — if it bring us to humility, to meekness and penitence, it is enough. And if it has not these effects, though we understand all myste-

ries and all knowledge concerning it, all its connexions with the infinite government of God, all its bearings on the welfare of the universe, it would profit us nothing.

But we may, as we proposed, inquire secondly, how the death of Christ promotes our sanctification? *In what way* is it that "the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin?"

1. The first reply with which the Scriptures furnish us, is, that he died as *an example of virtue*. Christ suffered for us, says an apostle, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps, 1 Pet. ii. 21. "Let this mind be in you"— i. e. humility — "which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God," — not being God, but "in the *form* of God," clothed with divine authority,— "thought it no robbery to be equal with God," — no robbery to retain this form or semblance of Divinity, this likeness to God; — or better — did not regard this likeness, this authority and dignity as robbers or soldiers do a spoil, a thing to be eagerly seized upon; "but humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Phil. ii. 5 — 8. With this example before them, the Apostle exhorts Christians to be like minded, having the same love; to avoid doing anything through strife or vain glory, and that, in lowliness of mind each should esteem other better than themselves.

We have neither space nor occasion, though it were easy, to introduce further quotations to the same effect. Every virtue which Jesus inculcated in his precepts he exemplified in his sufferings. The cross contains an epitome of Christianity, and it embodies the life and pow-

er of the christian doctrine. How many hearts have been moved by the patience of the sufferer, that never would have been touched by the teaching of the prophet! How many have his fortitude and meekness in the dread hour, his calmness and submission, his forbearance and his forgiving prayer, subdued to the love and imitation of him! How many at the foot of the cross, have been crucified to the world, have been inspired with the benevolent, the heavenly, the self-sacrificing spirit of Jesus — and have gone away to live a new and nobler life! Blessed fruits of his example! Blessed dominion of his virtues! "To this end he both died and rose again, that he might be lord both of the dead and the living;"— that he might have the pre-eminence both in this world and the world to come.

2. The second answer is, that Christ died, that he *might* rise again, and thus confirm the truth of his mission and our hope of a future life; and thus, in fine, supply us with the strongest possible inducement, to lead on earth a life of sobriety, virtue, and devotion. "For if we believe, that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. Wherefore, comfort" — exhort, — encourage "one another with these words."

3. But, in the third place, the death of Christ is represented in the Scriptures, *as a sacrifice;* we should have no objection to saying, as an atonement, in the natural and original sense which belongs to that word; the sense which it bears, in fact, in the only passage where it is found in the New Testament; that of reconciliation. But we will not dispute about a word. Sacrifice and

atonement bear, we suppose, in the popular theology, the same signification. Our inquiry is, in what sense is the death of Jesus a sacrifice ?

The principal difficulty attending this whole subject, in fact, is occasioned by the analogies, which the New Testament writers are accustomed to draw between the death of Christ, and the ancient sacrifices. Now, it must be seen on a moment's consideration, that the resemblance cannot hold in all respects. Christ was an intelligent person ; the Jewish sacrifices were animals or inanimate things. Christ offered himself ; the sacrifices were offered by those who sought to be benefited by them. These offerings were appointed as the tokens of devout and grateful, or penitent emotions in those who brought them. They brought the best of their fields and their flocks, and thus acknowledged God as the maker, preserver, proprietor, and giver of all things ; but surely the sufferings of our Saviour are not the appointed tokens, though they ought to be the inspirers of such sentiments or emotions in men. Once more ; the ancient expiatory victims stood between their offerers and death, or between them and an evil of some kind imposed by the laws of the country. From this exposure, the sin-offering freed them, by the appointment of God, *let the disposition of the offender be what it might*. But who will dare to say, unless it be the rankest Antinomian, that the death of Christ holds such a place as this in the spiritual dispensation of Christianity ? Who will venture to plead such a substitution ?

But still there are analogies between the sufferings of Christ and the ancient sacrifices. The death of Jesus

was really a sacrifice in the cause of human virtue and welfare, as truly so in regard to the end, though not in regard to the manner and means, as the offerings appointed in the Jewish ritual. "He died for us." Again; his death is a strong and affecting pledge of God's mercy. Or in other words, as the blood of the ancient sacrifices was a seal of God's covenant of forbearance and faithfulness to his people, so is the blood of Christ a perpetual seal, a perpetual confirmation of God's merciful intentions to the human race, "He that spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not," argues an apostle, "how shall he not with him also freely give us all things!" Rom. viii. 32. God was willing, that he whom he had raised up to be a Prince and a Saviour, on whom he had poured the grace of innocence and purity, and "the spirit without measure," to whom he had given peculiar tokens of his favor and love, that this being, so exalted, so benevolent, and so cherished, should fall a sacrifice in the cause he had undertaken. It pleased God, thus to show his concern for our salvation, and how great was the interposition it required. He has thus "set forth his Son as a propitiation, through faith in his blood;" a propitiation, that is as the ancient sacrifices were a token of his *being* propitious to the penitent and believing; to declare his kindness, that he might be, that is, might appear to be merciful, and the bestower of mercy on all who believe in Jesus, Rom. iii. 25, 26. By this signal means, God has proclaimed his love to us, and he has taught us to feel our unworthiness. He has taught us to bow before the cross with contrition, to cast down our pride and self-sufficiency, to come unto him in

the way, not of merit, but of mercy; to come to him confessing our sins, and crucifying within us every unholy affection. And thus, do we "receive the atonement" in the true and ancient sense; our sins being repented of are covered over, are forgiven.*

These though very briefly and imperfectly stated, seem to us to be the principal and evident relations of the death of Jesus to our sanctification and eternal happiness. If there are other reasons for this event, reasons which are intrinsic and inscrutable, which escape our discernment or surpass our comprehension, we are willing to receive what we do understand, and for the rest to cast ourselves on the simple appointment of God. And when we pray for blessings through Christ, or in the name of Christ, or through his blood, we ask through that mercy which he has proclaimed in his mission and death, through the encouragement he has given us to draw nigh to God, through his intercession, and through all that, known or unknown, which he has done, or is doing for us. We rejoice in him as an all-sufficient Saviour, as having done all that which was needful to be done, to prepare the way for our salvation. And we have the undoubting certainty, that if we make a grateful and humble use of his instructions, if we contemplate his sufferings in such a manner as to become penitent, meek, and pure in heart, God will pronounce our sins forgiven.

We must pass very cursorily two or three other subjects of popular belief. One of these is the tenet concerning *human depravity*. We believe that this depravity

* The Hebrew word rendered atonement, signified *to pitch, to smear, to cover over.*

is great and lamentable, but not that it is native, nor that it is total. We do not believe that man has any original, constitutional tendencies to sin, rather than to holiness; or that the infant of a day old, is chargeable with guilt in any sense: or that any man in this world ever arrives to an absolute, unqualified depravation of every affection. Nothing would be easier, we think, than to show that the native principles in man,— such as the desire of physical enjoyment, the desire of happiness, of power, of esteem, of knowledge, — that the principle of self-defence, the principle, i. e. of repelling, not of retaliating an injury,— that, in fine, the faculties of reason, conscience, memory &c, that all these principles of our constitution are either innocent, good, or useful; that the *real* qualities of our nature are perverted by sin, that our nature itself is violated by transgression. Nay, we believe that there is in human nature, as truly a love of excellence, though it is the weaker principle, as there is a love of happiness. And we are sorry for the depravity or for the blindness of him, who does not perceive this; who does not know that his *natural feelings* venerate and love the good and the virtuous: who is not conscious, that, not his sentiments only but his affections, not his conscience only but his heart, does, even in a fictitious tale, where of course he is perfectly disinterested, does constantly and warmly take the side of rectitude and virtue. We do not say that these emotions are necessarily habitual in those minds where they sometimes spring up; we do not say that they constitute the character of the mass of mankind; we do not say that the body even of the best community is more good than bad. But we do maintain,

that good and holy affections are natural to men, though they are too often corrupted by education, smothered by passion, and almost blotted out by vicious indulgence. Be it so, that there is corruption, and passion, and vice, and selfishness ; we feel them as deeply, it may be, and lament them as bitterly as others ; yet what, we fearlessly ask, what in the compass of the world will touch so many hearts and so deeply, — what will draw tears from so many eyes, as the story of a noble and generous action — of relief carried to the poor, the sick, and the suffering — of Howard's benevolence ; or, to name a far greater, of our Saviour's forgiving prayer on the cross ? And are the beings endowed with such affections, to be pronounced totally corrupt, malevolent, and selfish, and natively and utterly depraved and wicked?— Such is a glance at the argument from reason, from experience and observation. Scripture, we are satisfied, furnishes as little in favor of the doctrine we are considering. It teaches indeed, that men are greatly depraved, and that they err from their youth ; but all this falls short of the proof of *native* and *total* depravity. The expressions which are quoted for this purpose are evidently the language, not of philosophical discrimination, but of strong feeling. The very same sort of language we every day use and hear, without meaning, or understanding that the world around us is totally corrupt. We interpret the Bible as we do other books, as we do other language. We believe that the sacred teachers wrote as naturally as other men ; and we are glad to find that the learned among our Orthodox brethren are asserting this too. Besides; the argument that proves total depravity

from the Scriptures, proves too much. It proves that the sacred writers were themselves totally depraved; for they express self-abhorrence in terms as strong as they express abhorrence of other men's sins. At the same time, we are far from thinking lightly of human depravity. We regard it not as the great calamity only, derived from Adam, or from elsewhere, but as "the great transgression:" as the perversion of faculties and affections that were originally good. We regard it as involving every thing that should be chiefly dreaded and lamented on earth. And these sentiments, sentiments of deep and unfeigned regret and solicitude, we conceive to belong not to the vicious and profligate only, but to the moral, the decent, the sober, nay to the best of Christians.

We also maintain a *conversion* from this sinful state,—we urge it by every solemn sanction that can be derived from all present and future good and ill. There is a sense undoubtedly, in which conversion is the way which every human being must take, to become virtuous and holy. Even in infancy a habit of sensual or physical gratification, and indeed of gratification in general, is acquired, which, though not sinful, must be counteracted in the formation of the right character. This counteraction will cost self-denial, and the necessity of self-denial will provoke passion, and thus it is through the resistance of wrong inclinations only, in other words, *through a conversion*, that even a little child can become good. If these inclinations, instead of being resisted, are indulged, then is the difficulty and the magnitude of the work of conversion every moment increased. If they are partially resisted, a mixed character will be formed—the com-

mon character among men; if more earnestly, a character, whose leanings are towards virtue and piety, and yet which may not be decidedly christian. This is a less common case, but still by no means unusual. And it is concerning such cases as this, that we are dissatisfied with the indiscriminate and popular mode of preaching the doctrine of conversion. With regard to such persons we adopt the language of the admirable Paley. "To these, we must preach, not conversion, but *improvement*. Improvement, continual improvement must be our text and our topic; improvement in grace, in piety; in disposition, in virtue." We believe in conversion, then, earlier or later in its date, speedier or slower in its progress; but we do not believe that it is a change equally great to all, nor that it is to be urged *without qualification*, upon every man not absolutely a Christian. We are compelled to feel also, that this doctrine is commonly urged with accompaniments which are still less agreeable to our ideas of christian delicacy and propriety. We do not believe, that conversion is an extravagant and notable experience, or a momentary or miraculous impulse, which a man must go forth to proclaim to the neighborhood or village where he lives; but rather that it is the work of retirement and seclusion, carried on with prayer and watchfulness, with silent regrets, and earnest endeavors for amendment, and that in due time, it brings forth the beautiful fruits of modesty, humility, forbearance, kindness, and a tender conscience.

With regard to *divine influence*, we firmly believe in it; only we maintain, that it is strictly accommodated to the human powers, to human agency and freedom. And

election we do not object against, if men are elected to be Christians, as we believe, just as they are elected to be merchants or philosophers, — in perfect conformity with their own choice, endeavor, and moral action. And *perseverance* we do not oppose, but plead for, if the doctrine be, that he only is a good man who is perseveringly good.

Such are a very few of the very many reasons, which lead us to regard our faith, as truer, purer, more reasonable, more scriptural than the popular theology. And this is our principal answer to any that ask us a reason of our attachment to Unitarianism.

II. But to this we add, and shall now briefly consider another. We believe, then, that it is a MORE USEFUL system. We value it not only as a system of truth, but as a system of moral influence, of religious instruction. We are sometimes asked a reason, not of our faith in Unitarianism as a collection of doctrines, but of our regard for it as a mode of religious instruction; a reason for our attendance at a Unitarian church; and though our adversaries are very ready and free in assigning the motives, we shall undertake to state the grounds of our preference for ourselves. And this we shall do by stating some of our objections to the popular or Orthodox instructions of the day. It is not merely, then, that the doctrines of Orthodoxy, and of native depravity, of election and special grace, in particular, are often urged in a way that is discouraging and paralyzing to human exertion; occasioning doubt and distrust among the thinking, and evasions among the negligent; but we have more serious complaints against the prevailing

modes of religious instruction, than even these. We complain that there is a want of discrimination, a want of liberal and enlarged views, and in some of the most common representations of sin and future punishment, a want of real and close dealing with the conscience.

1. *The want of discrimination* appears in several respects, but they may all be reduced, we believe, under one observation; which is this; that the language of the apostles, which was adapted to the times when they lived, is too indiscriminately applied to the circumstances of religion at the present day.

Thus, the terms, *believing*, *being born again*, *being brought out of darkness into marvellous light*, terms which well applied to a time when a new religion was introduced, requiring belief before all things, and ushering every believer instantly into a world of new spiritual objects; these terms, we say, are still used as the standing representations of religion, instead of (what they truly mean) virtue, piety, goodness, obedience. We object to the constant use of the epithets, "believer, regenerate persons," &c, not because they originally meant anything with which we do not perfectly accord, but because they now are indiscriminate, at least, if not worse. They carry a vague, or else a false impression. They confuse the general mind, or they mislead it. They divert the thoughts, in a measure, we fear, from the simple matters of a good and devout heart and of holy living, and fix them on abstractions, experiences, exercises, rather than *upon duties*. Thus, to give another instance, "*obtaining a hope*," — because having hope was a matter of great and affecting interest in the skepticism

and despondency of a heathen state, and was one of the most precious results of the new religion ; — " obtaining a hope," is now made equivalent to obtaining religion itself. But, surely, these things are very different, and may be very little allied to each other. And yet, because Unitarian preachers conscientiously use the simple terms, that are expressive of religious character ; such as "obtaining habits of purity, being kind, and spiritual, and pure in heart," they are accused of coldness, and said to preach morality, and we suppose, do really lose influence with the unreflecting and superstitious. These are not the words and phrases that *to them* " savor of godliness," and nothing can persuade many people, but that the sacred and solemn import is wanting.

Again, we observe that *the broad distinction which anciently existed between Christians and Pagans ;* between the body of Christians and the mass of mankind ; in other words, between the church and the world, is still attempted to be kept up in our christian congregations. They are separated into the two classes of believers and unbelievers, saints and sinners, the precious and the vile; and they are respectively addressed in language, too flattering, we fear on the one hand, and on the other, too depressing and discouraging, and certainly degrading and irritating. The body of the congregation, called as they habitually are, by the opprobrious appellations, *sinners*, *impenitent persons*, *enemies of God*, *&c*,— constantly told that they have no part nor lot in the matter of christian fellowship and hope, that they are hateful in the sight of God and good men, are too apt to take it for granted that they *have* no real concern in the offerings and devo-

tions of the sanctuary. They are not encouraged to come as fellow worshippers, to offer their common prayers and thanksgivings, and they do not so come. Indeed, the minister does not consider them as taking part with him in prayer, and this is very often apparent from his devotions. It is from such causes that many go to the sanctuary without any interest or pleasure; that they go with a mechanical formality, or vague curiosity; that they stupidly or contemptuously hear what is said; that they endure long and wearisome prayers, and never once perhaps in these seasons yield to the kind and generous communion of saints. Oh! it is lamentable that anything should deprive them of this participation and privilege! that anything should sour and alienate their minds, and lead them to feel that religion is a set of repulsive dogmas and exclusive pretensions! But thus it is. And it is so, partly from the vain attempt to make distinctions, which are not palpable, and not to the extent alleged, real. A close analysis of the character of society will show us that there are innumerable shades of difference in it. It is true, that there is a broad distinction between good and bad men, but this does not accurately divide the community. Some are decidedly good; others are decidedly bad; but there are many more than either, that are of a mixed character. No preacher dare come forward to his congregation and tell them that a few of them only are good, and all the rest *bad people*. And if he did not wrap up the matter in a technical phraseology of "saints and sinners," "penitent and impenitent," &c, no congregation would endure it. For no congregation, we repeat and aver, can be divided into

two distinct classes, and broadly distinguished as the precious and the vile, righteous and wicked persons, the friends and the enemies of God.

Once more; the precept, "*be not conformed to the world*;" that is, be not conformed to the state of society around you, was a precept exceedingly pertinent in the days of the apostles; and, in many respects it is pertinent still. But as it originally *referred to a certain state* of society, *it must be modified by the changes* of society. Should there ever be a millennium, such as many Christians expect, this precept would have no application at all, and of course it must have less and less application as the world improves; that is, as it approaches towards a millennium. Now we object to the common modes of instruction, that this distinction is quite left out of sight. Christians are put on their guard against the world, against its hostility, its ridicule, or its friendship, just as if it was made up of treacherous, scoffing, persecuting Pagans. One of the first notions which a new convert acquires is, that men around him, perhaps his best friends, his kindred, are enemies or despisers of him on account of his religion, and he becomes, in consequence, sour or sanctimonious, or conceited, and at any rate, less kind, less agreeable, less modest; while he imagines that he is all the more pious and heavenly. At the same time he is taught to avoid all cheerful recreations, as the ways of the sinful world; at least all polished recreations. He may go to the military review; he may celebrate "the Election," or the festival of Independence; he may mingle with promiscuous crowds, amidst vulgar sports, vicious excesses, and profane oaths, and not lose his good

name; but let him beware of more decent and polished amusements, as he values his christian standing. We do not deny that recreation may be abused, as business and everything else may be abused. Still, however, the one was designed to occupy a place in life, as much as the other. Our concern is not to extirpate but to improve the pleasures of society. And to refuse recreations to the young, and relaxation to the busy, and amusement to the toiling, is not only an unwise and an unpromising undertaking, but it is to distort the rational and cheerful religion we profess, to disparage it in the eyes of intelligent and thinking men, and to dissuade them from its duties and ordinances. And it is at the same time to hold up to Christians a very loose and questionable standard of piety.

When, therefore, Christians are told that they should not be conformed to the world, let there be some discrimination used — let them be told to *what* they should not be conformed. Let them be put on their guard as much as any one pleases against worldliness, against the inordinate love of money, against selfishness in all its forms, against the spirit of the world, so far as it is bad, against the maxims of the world, so far as they are corrupt, against an accommodating subserviency to its influence and opinions. And in guarding themselves from all this, they will find enough to do, without entering into a contest with the modes and forms of society, with innocent recreations or with a hostility and contempt from those around them, which they foolishly fancy, or else have, themselves, by their fanaticism or conceit, justly provoked.

2. We might mention other instances of the want of

discrimination, but must pass to notice *the deficiency of practical, enlarged and liberal views*, and under this head, we must content ourselves with one or two examples. In the first place, we have observed that with most Orthodox preachers, the interests of this world are studiously set in opposition to the interests of the world to come. One of the grand tests of piety, which they propose to their hearers is, whether they "can give up the world." The objects and the blessings of the future world are often represented by them as at war with the objects and blessings of the present. To secure both, if we may judge from their current language, they deem impossible. Dr Watts thus expresses the sentiment:

> "I give my mortal interest up,
> And make my God my all;"—

as if making his God his all, was not at once securing in the highest degree, both his mortal and immortal interest. In the eyes of the popular theology, there seems to be little that is lovely upon the face of the earth. It is an accursed spot, stricken with the vengeance of God, and encumbered with the footsteps of an outcast race. It is "a dark world" — and "a vile world" — and "a worthless world." Disparaging epithets seem easily and abundantly to grow out of the popular creed and the popular way of thinking. "The men of this world," we all know, is a current phrase of the pulpit for sinful and unregenerate men. To enjoy this world, to delight in it, is an offence to the religion of the day.

With these ideas is naturally associated, in the next place, the equally limited notion, that religion is an unhappiness. A life of religion is considered by multitudes

as a kind of penance. It is the relinquishment of a present for a future good. Piety, as men are generally led to suppose, is a most undesirable attainment. Duty is an irksome labor. Self-denial is an unwelcome, joyless task. The men of sensual pleasure, it is imagined, would be fully entitled to boast over the men of religion, if it were not for the compensations of a future state.

Few, all this seems to us a low and narrow way of thinking. RELIGION IS HAPPINESS. It has the promise of the life that *now* is, as well as that which is to come. It enables us to make the most of this world and of the future, at the same time. The interests of the two worlds are not at all incompatible, not at all opposite. Nay, they are essentially involved in each other. No man can enjoy the best of this life, who does not best prepare for a future. Honesty is the best policy; virtue is the only peace; piety enchances all the joys of life. To behold the glory of God in all things, to commune with him through the medium of all that he has made and all that he appoints, to walk in an abiding peace with our own conscience, to indulge in none but virtuous pursuits and rational pleasures; to be benevolent and kindly affectioned, and contented and humble, to receive the gifts of God with perpetual thankfulness, to grow in purity and devotion, with a progress as constant as that of life; this is the only true and infallible way of enjoying the present world; and this, surely, is the preparation for a better world to come.

We cannot sufficiently lament that a narrow sense and a dark theology have perpetuated among us so many of the notions of ascetic superstition and Popish penance,

that they have thrown a veil over the brightness of life, and marred its beauty and joy. Enough of evil we have to endure, without our own preposterous *devices* to be miserable, enough to need all the constancy, and cheerfulness, and powerful support of religion. And enough have men to contend with in the acquisition of a true piety, to need all the animating expectation of an unspeakable and present happiness. Let all men know that heaven begins where virtue and piety begin their heavenly course; let them be instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven, neither to say, "lo! here, nor lo! there, for the kingdom of heaven is within them!"

3. One further practical reason we have to offer for our preference of the Unitarian system of instruction. We say, then, that *many of the most popular representations of sin and its punishment*, while they awe and shock the mind, do not, as we conceive, really touch the conscience and the heart. On this point of close and thorough dealing with the conscience, we know that Orthodox preachers consider the pre-eminence as conceded to them; but we shall call the claim in question. To say or to imply, as they must do, that the majority of those whom they address is composed of persons utterly depraved; to say that sin is an infinite evil, that every sin deserves an infinite punishment, that the sins of every day and hour deserve the everlasting damnation of hell, and that every unconverted man ought to lie down every night with this conviction; to say these things, is, we believe, a very doubtful way of affecting the conscience. Reflecting and independent minds will rise up against such doctrine; the weak, indeed, may bow down, but it will be

the prostration of the superstitious, and not of the contrite. Let the preacher, instead of dealing in these imposing generalities, descend, and lay a skilful hand upon the sins of the passions and the senses, and of the heart that God alone seeth, and he will do a more effectual work. Of the same nature is the common representation of sinners, as having "*a contest and a controversy with the Almighty.*" Men lend an incredulous ear to such charges. They do not feel them to be true. They are not conscious of entering into any such impious warfare with God. We all know that we are sinners, and if we are told so in simple terms, with searching applications, and affectionate remonstrances, we may deeply feel it. But it avails little to bring down upon us charges of such dreadful and incredible guilt and insanity — of "hating God" — "and wishing to tear him from his throne," &c. We doubt not that such monstrous doctrines have been preached concerning God, as have awakened the abhorrence of conscience, and of every moral and just sentiment of the human heart. But this abhorrence was directed, not against the true character of God, but against a frightful picture of the imagination. Men have imagined, no doubt, that they hated God, but it was only a false deity that they hated. It is true, that in the Scriptures, men are called "the enemies of God;" but this is only by construction, and ought to be explained. They are enemies of God, only as they are enemies of God's laws, of virtue, of conscience, of their own welfare.

And as destroyers of their own welfare, we may add, *are they punished;* as the voluntary authors of tempers and habits, which carry their own misery and punishment

with them. This view of the subject addresses at once a man's reason, and conscience, and experience; and works conviction. To awaken horror is a different thing. This may be done by the description of elemental fires, of writhing in eternal flames, of the breath of the Almighty kindling the heated furnace of his wrath. All this may scare the imagination of the sinful man, but it will come nearer to him to tell him that God, instead of inflicting vengeance on him as a vindictive executioner, will, as a pitying father, leave him to the consequences of his wickedness. It will come nearer, far nearer to him, to point him to the curse of sinful habits, to the anguish of remorse, to that hell whose fires he is already kindling in his own bosom. In fine, the religion that shall affect a man, must not be dressed up in technical phrases, must not propound indiscriminate notions and illiberal dogmas to him, nor strive to encompass him with horrors, from which his sense and reason revolt. It cannot be *imposed* upon him, but must be *wrought in him* by his own free, willing, cheerful endeavours.

Thus we have stated some of the speculative and practical grounds of our preference for the system of Unitarianism over the systems of doctrine and instruction that prevail around us. We do not say that *every* Orthodox preacher adopts the mode of instruction which we have represented; but we say, that this is the prevailing style of teaching. We know that there are men of liberal and cultivated minds among Orthodox teachers; men of kind and catholic feelings, of rational and comprehensive views of religion, and with such men we have

no controversy. That they are nominally Trinitarians, is to us a matter comparatively of no consequence. Our chief objections to Orthodoxy are practical. We prefer a different kind of instruction, not because it tends to promote vicious indulgence, and to hush the monitions of conscience — God forbid! but because we think the religious teaching that we value, more discriminating, more liberal, more rational, simple, and touching to the heart and conscience; because, too, we regard religion as the grand concern of our being, the great object designed to call forth the free action of our faculties, and to give them their full expansion; because we regard religion as a *friend*, with whom we would live without distrust, and die without fear, and would confide in, to lead us to the regions of immortality!

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A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

EVIDENCES OF REVEALED RELIGION.

BY WILLIAM E. CHANNING, D. D.

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BOSTON, PRINTED BY I. R. BUTTS.

DISCOURSE.

The evidences of revealed religion are the subject of this lecture, a subject of great extent, as well as of vast importance. In discussing it, an immense variety of learning has been employed, and all the powers of the intellect been called forth. History, metaphysics, ethical science, and the science of human nature, have been summoned to the controversy, and have contributed to Christianity the aids of abstract reasoning, of criticism, of ancient learning, and of moral sentiment. To condense into one discourse what scholars and great men have written on this point, is impossible, even if it were desirable; and I have stated the extent of speculation into which our subject has led, not because I propose to give an abstract of others' labors, but because I wish you to understand, that the topic is one not easily despatched, and because I would invite you to follow me in a discussion, which will require concentrated and continued attention. A subject more worthy of attention, than the claims of that religion, which was impressed on

our childhood, and which is acknowledged to be the only firm foundation of the hope of immortality, cannot be presented; and our minds must want the ordinary seriousness of human nature, if it cannot arrest us.

That Christianity has been opposed, is a fact, implied in the establishment of this lecture. That it has had adversaries of no mean intellect, you know. I propose in this discourse to make some remarks on what seems to me the great objection to Christianity, on the general principle on which its evidences rest, and on some of its particular evidences.

The great objection to Christianity, the only one which has much influence at the present day, meets us at the very threshold. We cannot, if we would, evade it, for it is founded on a primary and essential attribute of the religion. The objection is oftener felt than expressed, and amounts to this, — that miracles are incredible, and that the supernatural character of an alleged fact is proof enough of its falsehood. So strong is this propensity to doubt of departures from the order of nature, that there are sincere Christians, who incline to rest their religion wholly on its internal evidence, and to overlook the outward extraordinary interposition of God, by which it was at first established. But the difficulty cannot in this way be evaded; for Christianity is not only *confirmed* by miracles, but is *in itself*, in its very essence, a miraculous religion. It is not a system, which the human mind gathered in the ordinary exercise of its powers, from the ordinary course of nature. It professes to be a supernatural communication from God. So that the objection

which I have stated still presses upon us, and, if it be well grounded, it is fatal to christianity.

It is proper then to begin the discussion, with inquiring, whence the disposition to discredit miracles springs, and how far it is rational. A preliminary remark of some importance is, that this disposition is not a necessary part or principle of our mental constitution, like the disposition to trace effects to adequate causes. We are indeed so framed, as to expect a continuance of that order of nature, which we have uniformly experienced; but not so framed as to revolt at alleged violations of that order, and to account them impossible or absurd. On the contrary, take men at large, and they discover a strong and incurable propensity to believe in miracles. Almost all histories, until within the two last centuries, reported seriously supernatural facts. Skepticism as to miracles, is comparatively a new thing, if we except the Epicurean or Atheistical sect among the ancients ; and so far from being founded in human nature, it is resisted by an almost infinite preponderance of belief on the other side.

Whence then has this skepticism sprung? It may be explained by two principal causes. 1. It is now an acknowledged fact, among enlightened men, that in past times and in our own, a strong disposition has existed and still exists, to admit miracles without examination. Human credulity is found to have devoured nothing more eagerly than reports of prodigies. Now it is argued, that we discover here a principle of human nature, namely, the love of the supernatural and marvellous, which accounts sufficiently for the belief of miracles, wherever

we find it ; and that it is consequently unnecessary and unphilosophical to seek for other causes, and especially to admit that most improbable one, the actual existence of miracles. This sweeping conclusion is a specimen of that rash habit of generalizing, which rather distinguishes our times, and shows that philosophical reasoning has made fewer advances than we are apt to boast. It is true that there is a principle of credulity as to prodigies in a considerable part of society, a disposition to believe without due scrutiny. But this principle, like every other in our nature, has its limits ; acts according to fixed laws ; is not omnipotent ; cannot make the eyes see, and the ears hear, and the understanding credit delusions, under all imaginable circumstances; but requires the concurrence of various circumstances and of other principles of our nature in order to its operation. For example, the belief of spectral appearances has been very common; but under what circumstances and in what state of mind has it occurred ? Do men see ghosts in broad day, and amidst cheerful society? Or in solitary places ; in grave-yards ; in twilights or mists, where outward objects are so undefined, as easily to take a form from imagination ; and in other circumstances favorable to terror, and associated with the delusion in question? The principle of credulity is as regular in its operation, as any other principle of the mind; and is so dependent on circumstances, and so restrained and checked by other parts of human nature, that sometimes the most obstinate incredulity is found in that very class of people whose easy belief on other occasions moves our contempt. It is well known, for example, that the efficacy

of the vaccine inoculation has been encountered with much more unyielding skepticism among the vulgar, than among the improved; and in general, it may be affirmed, that the credulity of the ignorant operates under the control of their strongest passions and impressions, and that no class of society yields a slower assent to positions, which manifestly subvert their old modes of thinking and most settled prejudices. It is then very unphilosophical to assume this principle as an explanation of all miracles whatever. I grant that the fact, that accounts of supernatural agency so generally prove false, is a reason for looking upon them with peculiar distrust. Miracles ought on this account to be sifted more than common facts. But if we find, that a belief in a series of supernatural works has occurred under circumstances very different from those, under which false prodigies have been received, under circumstances most unfavorable to the operation of credulity; then this belief cannot be resolved into the common causes, which have blinded men in regard to supernatural agency. We must look for other causes, and if none can be found but the actual existence of the miracles, then true philosophy binds us to believe them. I close this head with observing, that the propensity of men to believe in what is strange and miraculous, though a presumption against particular miracles, is not a presumption against miracles universally, but rather the reverse; for great principles of human nature have generally a foundation in truth, and one explanation of this propensity so common to mankind is obviously this, that in the earlier ages of the human race, miraculous interpositions, suited to man's infant

state, were not uncommon, and being the most striking facts of human history, they spread through all future times a belief and expectation of miracles.

2. I proceed now to the *second* cause of the skepticism in regard to supernatural agency, which has grown up, especially among the more improved, in later times. These later times are distinguished, as you well know, by successful researches into nature; and the discoveries of science have continually added strength to that great principle, that the phenomena of the universe are regulated by general and permanent laws, or that the Author of the universe exerts his power according to an established order. Nature, the more it is explored, is found to be uniform. We observe an unbroken succession of causes and effects. Many phenomena, once denominated irregular, and ascribed to supernatural agency, are found to be connected with preceding circumstances, as regularly as the most common events. The comet, we learn, observes the same attraction as the sun and planets. When a new phenomenon now occurs, no one thinks it miraculous, but believes that when better understood it may be reduced to laws already known, or is an example of a law not yet investigated.

Now this increasing acquaintance with the uniformity of nature begets a distrust of alleged violations of it, and a rational distrust too; for while many causes of mistake in regard to alleged miracles may be assigned, there is but one adequate cause of real miracles, that is, the power of God; and the regularity of nature forms a strong presumption against the miraculous exertion of this power, except in extraordinary circumstances, and

for extraordinary purposes, to which the established laws of the creation are not competent. But the observation of the uniformity of nature not merely begets this rational distrust of alleged violations of it. It produces a secret feeling, as if such violations were impossible. That attention to the powers of nature, which is implied in scientific research, tends to weaken the practical conviction of a higher power; and the laws of the creation, instead of being regarded as the modes of divine operation, come insensibly to be considered as fetters on his agency, as too sacred to be suspended even by their Author. This secret feeling, essentially atheistical, and at war with all sound philosophy, is the chief foundation of that skepticism, which prevails in regard to miraculous agency, and deserves our particular consideration.

To a man, whose belief in God is strong and practical, a miracle will appear as possible as any other effect, as the most common event in life ; and the argument against miracles, drawn from the uniformity of nature, will weigh with him, only as far as this uniformity is a pledge and proof of the Creator's disposition to accomplish his purposes by a fixed order or mode of operation. Now it is freely granted, that the Creator's regard or attachment to such an order may be inferred from the steadiness with which he observes it; and a strong presumption lies against any violation of it on slight occasions, or for purposes to which the established laws of nature are adequate. But this is the utmost, which the order of nature authorizes us to infer respecting its Author. It forms no presumption against miracles universally, in all imaginable cases; but may even furnish a presumption in their favor.

We are never to forget, that God's adherence to the order of the universe is not necessary and mechanical, but intelligent and voluntary. He adheres to it not for its own sake, or because it has a sacredness, which compels him to respect it, but simply because it is most suited to accomplish purposes in which he is engaged. It is a means and not an end ; and like all other means must give way, when the end can best be promoted without it. It is the mark of a weak mind, to make an idol of order and method; to cling to established forms of business, when they clog instead of advancing it. If then the great purpose of the universe can best be accomplished by departing from its established laws, these laws will undoubtedly be suspended ; and though broken in the letter, they will be observed in their spirit, for the ends, for which they were first instituted, will be advanced by their violation. Now the question arises, for what purposes were nature and its order appointed: and there is no presumption in saying, that the highest of these is the improvement of intelligent beings. Mind, (by which we mean both moral and intellectual powers,) is God's first end. The great purpose, for which an order of nature is fixed, is plainly the formation of Mind. In a creation without order, where events would follow without any regular succession, it is obvious, that Mind must be kept in perpetual infancy: for in such a universe, there could be no reasoning from effects to causes, no induction to establish general truths, no adaptation of means to ends ; that is, no science relating to God, or matter, or mind ; no action ; no virtue. The great purpose of God then, I repeat it, in establishing the order

of nature, is to form and advance the mind; and if the case should occur, in which the interests of the mind could best be advanced by departing from this order or by miraculous agency, then the great purpose of the creation, the great end of its laws and regularity, would demand such departure ; and miracles, instead of warring against, would concur with nature.

Now we Christians maintain, that such a case has existed. We affirm, that when Jesus Christ came into the world, nature had failed to communicate instructions to men, in which, as intelligent beings, they had the deepest concern, and on which the full development of their highest faculties essentially depended ; and we affirm, that there was no prospect of relief from nature ; so that an exigence had occurred, in which additional communications, supernatural lights, might rationally be expected from the Father of spirits. Let me state two particulars out of many, in which men needed intellectual aids, not given by nature. I refer to the doctrine of one God and Father, on which all piety rest; and to the doctrine of Immortality, which is the great spring of virtuous effort. Had I time to enlarge on the history of that period, I might show you under what heaps of rubbish and superstition these doctrines were buried. But I should repeat only what you know familiarly. The works of ancient genius, which form your studies, carry on their front the brand of polytheism, and of debasing error on subjects of the first and deepest concern. It is more important to observe, that the very uniformity of nature had some tendency to obscure the doctrines which I have named, or at least to impair their practical power, so that a departure from

this uniformity was needed to fasten them on men's minds.

That a fixed order of nature, though a proof of the One God, to reflecting and enlarged understandings, has yet a tendency to hide him from men in general, will appear, if we consider first, that, as the human mind is constituted, what is regular and of constant occurrence, excites it feebly ; and benefits, flowing to it through fixed, unchanging laws, seem to come by a kind of necessity, and are apt to be traced up to natural causes alone. Accordingly, religious convictions and feelings, even in the present advanced condition of society, are excited, not so much by the ordinary course of God's providence, as by sudden, unexpected events, which rouse and startle the mind, and speak of a power higher than nature. — There is another way, in which a fixed order of nature is unfavorable to just impressions respecting its Author. It discovers to us in the Creator a regard to *general* good, rather than an affection to *individuals*. The laws of nature, operating, as they do, with an inflexible steadiness, never varying to meet the cases and wants of individuals, and inflicting much private suffering in their stern administration for general good, give the ideas of a distant, reserved sovereign, much more than of a tender parent ; and yet this last view of God is the only effectual security from superstition and idolatry. Nature then would not have brought back the world to its Creator.—And as to the doctrine of Immortality, the order of the natural world had little tendency to teach this, at least with clearness and energy. The natural world contains no provisions or arrangements for

reviving the dead. The sun and the rain, which cover the tomb with verdure, send no vital influences to the mouldering body. The researches of science detect no secret processes for restoring the lost powers of life. If man is to live again, he is not to live through any known laws of nature, but by a power higher than nature; and how then can we be *assured* of this truth, but by a manifestation of this power, that is, by a miraculous agency confirming a future life?

I have labored in these remarks to show, that the uniformity of nature is no presumption against miraculous agency, when employed in confirmation of such a religion as Christianity. Nature, on the contrary, furnishes a presumption in its favor. Nature clearly shows to us a power above itself, so that it proves miracles to be possible. Nature reveals purposes and attributes in its Author, with which Christianity remarkably agrees. Nature too has deficiencies, which show that it was not intended by its Author to be his whole method of instructing mankind; and in this way it gives great confirmation to Christianity, which meets its wants, supplies its chasms, explains its mysteries, and lightens its heart-oppressing cares and sorrows.

Before quitting the general consideration of miracles I ought to take some notice of Hume's celebrated argument on this subject; not that it merits the attention which it has received, for infidelity has seldom forged a weaker weapon; but because it is specious, and has derived weight from the name of its author. The argument is briefly this, — "that belief is founded upon and regulated by experience. Now we often experience testi-

mony to be false, but never witness a departure from the order of nature. That men may deceive us when they testify to miracles, is therefore more accordant with experience than that nature should be irregular; and hence there is a balance of proof against miracles, a presumption so strong as to outweigh the strongest testimony." The usual replies to this argument I have not time to repeat. Dr Campbell's work, which is accessible to all, will show you, that it rests on an equivocal use of terms, and will furnish you with many fine remarks on testimony, and on the condition or qualities which give it validity. I will only add a few remarks, which seem to me worthy of attention.

1. This argument affirms, that the credibility of facts or statements is to be decided by their accordance with the established order of nature, and by this standard only. Now, if nature comprehended all existences and all powers, this position might be admitted. But if there is a Being higher than nature, the origin of all its powers and motions, and whose character falls under our notice and experience as truly as the creation, then there is an additional standard, to which facts and statements are to be referred; and works, which violate nature's order, will still be credible, if they agree with the known properties and attributes of its author; because for such works we can assign an adequate cause and sufficient reasons, and these are the qualities and conditions, on which credibility depends.

2. This argument of Hume proves too much, and therefore proves nothing. It proves too much; for if I am to reject the strongest testimony to miracles, because

testimony has often deceived me, whilst nature's order has never been found to fail, then I ought to reject a miracle, even if I should see it with my own eyes, and if all my senses should attest it ; for all my senses have sometimes given false reports, whilst nature has never gone astray; and, therefore, be the circumstances ever so decisive or inconsistent with deception, still I must not believe what I see, and hear, and touch, what my senses, exercised according to the most deliberate judgment, declare to be true. All this the argument requires, and it proves too much ; for disbelief, in the case supposed, is out of our power, and is instinctively pronounced absurd; and what is more, it would subvert that very order of nature on which the argument rests ; for this order of nature is learned only by the exercise of my senses and judgment, and if these fail me, in the most unexceptionable circumstances, then their testimony to nature is of little worth.

Once more; this argument is built on an ignorance of the nature of testimony, and it is surprising, that this error has not been more strikingly exposed. Testimony, we are told, cannot prove a miracle. Now the truth is, that testimony, of itself and immediately, proves no fact whatever, not even the most common. Testimony can do nothing more than show us the state of another's mind in regard to a given fact. It can only show us, that the testifier has a belief, a conviction, that a certain phenomenon or event has occurred. Here testimony stops ; and the reality of the event is to be judged altogether from the nature and degree of this conviction, and from the circumstances under which it exists. This

conviction is an effect, which must have a cause, and needs to be explained ; and if no cause can be found but the real occurrence of the event, then this occurrence is admitted as true. Such is the extent of testimony. Now a man, who affirms a miraculous phenomenon or event, may give us just as decisive proofs, by his character and conduct, of the strength and depth of his conviction, as if he were affirming a common occurrence. Testimony then does just as much in the case of miracles, as of common events; that is, it discloses to us the conviction of another's mind. Now this conviction in the case of miracles requires a cause, an explanation, as much as in every other; and if the circumstances be such, that it could not have sprung up and been established but by the reality of the alleged miracle, then that great and fundamental principle of human belief, namely, that every effect must have a cause, compels us to admit the miracle.

It may be observed of Hume and of other philosophical opposers of our religion, that they are much more inclined to argue against miracles *in general*, than against the particular miracles, on which Christianity rests. And the reason is obvious. Miracles, when considered in a general, abstract manner, that is, when divested of all circumstances, and supposed to occur as disconnected facts, to stand alone in history, to have no explanations or reasons in preceding events, and no influence on those which follow, are indeed open to great objection, as wanton and useless violations of nature's order; and it is accordingly against miracles, considered in this naked, general form, that the arguments of infidelity are chiefly

urged. But it is great disingenuity to class under this head the miracles of Christianity. They are palpably different. They do not stand alone in history; but are most intimately incorporated with it. They were demanded by the state of the world which preceded them, and they have left deep traces on all subsequent ages. In fact, the history of the whole civilized world, since their alleged occurrence, has been swayed and colored by them, and is wholly inexplicable without them. Now such miracles are not to be met and disposed of by general reasonings, which apply only to insulated, unimportant, uninfluential prodigies.

I have thus considered the objections to miracles in general; and I would close this head with observing, that these objections will lose their weight, just in proportion as we strengthen our conviction of God's power over nature and of his paternal interest in his creatures. The great repugnance to the belief of miraculous agency is founded in a lurking atheism, which ascribes supremacy to nature, and which, whilst it professes to believe in God, questions his tender concern for the improvement of men. To a man who cherishes a sense of God, the great difficulty is not to account for miracles, but to account for their rare occurrence. One of the mysteries of the universe is this, that its Author retires so continually behind the veil of his works, that the great and good Father does not manifest himself more distinctly to his creatures. There is something like coldness and repulsiveness, in instructing us only by fixed, inflexible laws of nature. The intercourse of God with Adam and the patriarchs suits our best conceptions of the relation

which he bears to the human race, and ought not to surprise us more, than the expression of a human parent's tenderness and concern towards his offspring.

After the remarks now made to remove the objection to revelation in general, I proceed to consider the evidences of the christian religion in particular ; and these are so numerous, that should I attempt to compress them into the short space which now remains, I could give but a syllabus, a dry and uninteresting index. It will be more useful to state to you, with some distinctness, the *general principle* into which all christian evidences may be resolved, and on which the whole religion rests, and then to illustrate it in a few striking particulars. All the evidences of Christianity may be traced to this great principle, — that every effect must have an adequate cause. We claim for our religion a divine original, because no adequate cause for it can be found in the powers or passions of human nature, or in the circumstances under which it appeared ; because it can only be accounted for by the interposition of that Being, to whom its first preachers universally ascribe it, and with whose nature it perfectly agrees.

Christianity, — by which we mean not merely the doctrines of the religion, but everything relating to it, its rise, its progress, the character of its author, the conduct of its propagators,—Christianity, in this broad sense, can only be accounted for in two ways. It either sprung from the principles of human nature, under the excitements, motives, impulses of the age in which it was first preached ; or it had its origin in a higher and superna-

tural agency. To which of these causes the religion should be referred, is not a question beyond our reach; for being partakers of human nature, and knowing more of it than of any other part of creation, we can judge with sufficient accuracy of the operation of its principles, and of the effects to which they are competent. It is indeed true, that human powers are not exactly defined, nor can we state precisely the bounds beyond which they cannot pass ; but still the disproportion between human nature and an effect ascribed to it may be so vast and palpable, as to satisfy us at once, that the effect is inexplicable by human power. I know not precisely what advances may be made by the intellect of an unassisted savage ; but that a savage in the woods could not compose the Principia of Newton is about as plain, as that he could not create the world. I know not the point, at which bodily strength must stop ; but that a man cannot carry Atlas or Andes on his shoulders is a safe position. The question, therefore, whether the principles of human nature, under the circumstances, in which it was placed at Christ's birth, will explain his religion, is one to which we are competent, and is the great question on which the whole controversy turns.

Now we maintain, that a great variety of facts belonging to this religion, — such as the character of its Founder ; its peculiar principles ; the style and character of its records; its progress; the conduct, circumstances and sufferings of its first propagators; the reception of it from the first on the ground of miraculous attestations; the prophecies which it fulfilled, and which it contains; its influence on society, and other circumstances connect-

ed with it; are utterly inexplicable by human powers and principles, but accord with and are fully explained by the power and perfection of God.

These various particulars I cannot attempt to unfold. One or two may be illustrated to show you the mode of applying the principles which I have laid down. I will take first the *character of Jesus Christ*. How is this to be explained by the principles of human nature? — We are immediately struck with this peculiarity in the Author of Christianity, that whilst all other men are formed in a measure by the spirit of the age, we can discover in Jesus no impression of the period in which he lived. We know with considerable accuracy the state of society, the modes of thinking, the hopes and expectations of the country in which Jesus was born and grew up; and he is as free from them, and as exalted above them, as if he had lived in another world, or, with every sense shut on the objects around him. His character has in it nothing local or temporary. It can be explained by nothing around him. His history shows him to us a solitary being, living for purposes which none but himself comprehended, and enjoying not so much as the sympathy of a single mind. His apostles, his chosen companions, brought to him the spirit of the age; and nothing shows its strength more strikingly, than the slowness with which it yielded in these honest men to the instructions of Jesus.

Jesus came to a nation expecting a Messiah; and he claimed this character. But instead of conforming to the opinions which prevailed in regard to the Messiah, he resisted them wholly and without reserve. To a

people anticipating a triumphant leader, under whom vengeance as well as ambition was to be glutted by the prostration of their oppressors, he came as a spiritual leader, teaching humility and peace. This undistinguished hostility to the dearest hopes and prejudices of his nation ; this disdain of the usual compliances, by which ambition and imposture conciliate adherents; this deliberate exposure of himself to rejection and hatred, cannot easily be explained by the common principles of human nature, and excludes the possibility of selfish aims in the Author of Christianity.

One striking peculiarity in Jesus is the *extent*, the vastness of his views. Whilst all around him looked for a Messiah to liberate God's ancient people, whilst to every other Jew, Judea was the exclusive object of pride and hope, Jesus came, declaring himself to be the deliverer and light of *the world*, and in his whole teaching and life, you see a consciousness, which never forsakes him, of a relation to the whole human race. This idea of blessing mankind, of spreading a universal religion, was the most magnificent which had ever entered man's mind. All previous religions had been given to particular nations. No conqueror, legislator, philosopher, in the extravagance of ambition, had ever dreamed of subjecting all nations to a common faith.

This conception of a universal religion, intended alike for Jew and Gentile, for all nations and climes, is wholly inexplicable by the circumstances of Jesus. He was a Jew, and the first, and deepest, and most constant impression on a Jew's mind, was that of the superiority, conferred on his people and himself by the national religion

introduced by Moses. The wall between the Jew and the Gentile seemed to reach to heaven. The abolition of the peculiarity of Moses, the prostration of the temple on Mount Zion, the erection of a new religion, in which all men would meet as brethren, and which would be the common and equal property of Jew and Gentile, these were of all ideas the last to spring up in Judea, the last for enthusiasm or imposture to originate.

Compare next these views of Christ with his station in life. He was of humble birth and education, with nothing in his lot, with no extensive means, no rank, or wealth, or patronage, to infuse vast thoughts and extravagant plans. The shop of a carpenter, the village of Nazareth, were not spots for ripening a scheme, more aspiring and extensive than had ever been formed. It is a principle of human nature, that except in case of insanity, *some* proportion is observed between the power of an individual, and his plans and hopes. The purpose, to which Jesus devoted himself, was as ill suited to his condition as an attempt to change the seasons, or to make the sun rise in the west. That a young man, in obscure life, belonging to an oppressed nation, should seriously think of subverting the time-hallowed and deep-rooted religions of the world, is a strange fact; but with this purpose we see the mind of Jesus thoroughly imbued; and, sublime as it is, he never falls below it in his language or conduct, but speaks and acts with a consciousness of superiority, with a dignity and authority, becoming this unparalleled destination.

In this connexion I cannot but add another striking circumstance in Jesus, and that is, the calm confidence

with which he always looked forward to the accomplishment of his design. He fully knew the strength of the passions and powers which were arrayed against him, and was perfectly aware that his life was to be shortened by violence ; yet not a word escapes him implying a doubt of the ultimate triumphs of his religion. One of the beauties of the Gospels, and one of the proofs of their genuineness, is found in our Saviour's indirect and obscure allusions to his approaching sufferings, and to the glory which was to follow; allusions showing us the workings of a mind, thoroughly conscious of being appointed to accomplish infinite good through great calamity. This entire and patient relinquishment of immediate success, this ever present persuasion, that he was to perish before his religion would advance, and this calm, unshaken anticipation of distant and unbounded triumphs, are remarkable traits, throwing a tender and solemn grandeur over our Lord, and wholly inexplicable by human principles or by the circumstances in which he was placed.

The views hitherto taken of Christ relate to his public character and office. If we pass to what may be called his private character, we shall receive the same impression of inexplicable excellence. The most striking trait in Jesus was, undoubtedly, benevolence; and although this virtue had existed before, yet it had not been manifested in the same form and extent. Christ's benevolence was distinguished first by its expansiveness. At that age an unconfined philanthropy, proposing and toiling to do good without distinction of country or rank, was unknown. Love to man as man, love, comprehending the hated Samaritan and the despised publican, was a fea-

ture which separated Jesus from the best men of his nation and of the world. Another characteristic of the benevolence of Jesus was its gentleness and tenderness, forming a strong contrast with the hardness and ferocity of the spirit and manners which then prevailed, and with that sternness and inflexibility which the purest philosophy of Greece and Rome inculcated as the perfection of virtue. But its most distinguishing trait was its superiority to injury. Revenge was one of the recognised rights of the age in which he lived; and though a few sages, who had seen its inconsistency with man's dignity, had condemned it, yet none had inculcated the duty of regarding one's worst enemies with that kindness which God manifests to sinful men, and of returning curses with blessings and prayers. This form of benevolence, the most disinterested and divine form, was, as you well know, manifested by Jesus Christ in infinite strength, amidst injuries and indignities which cannot be surpassed. Now this singular eminence of goodness, this superiority to the degrading influences of the age, under which all other men suffered, needs to be explained; and one thing it demonstrates, that Jesus Christ was not an unprincipled deceiver, exposing not only his own life, but the lives of confiding friends, in an enterprise next to desperate.

I cannot enlarge on other traits of the character of Christ. I will only observe, that it had one distinction, which, more than anything, forms a perfect character. It was made up of contrasts; in other words it was a union of excellences, which are not easily reconciled, which seem at first sight incongruous, but which, when blended and duly proportioned, constitute moral harmo-

ny, and attract with equal power, love and veneration. For example, we discover in Jesus Christ an unparalleled dignity of character, a consciousness of greatness, never discovered or approached by any other individual in history ; and yet this was blended with a condescension, lowliness, and unostentatious simplicity, which had never before been thought consistent with greatness. In like manner he united an utter superiority to the world, to its pleasures and ordinary interests, with suavity of manners and freedom from austerity. He joined strong feeling and self-possession; an indignant sensibility to sin and compassion to the sinner ; an intense devotion to his work, and calmness under opposition and ill success ; a universal philanthropy, and a susceptibility of private attachments ; the authority which became the Saviour of the world, and the tenderness and gratitude of a son. Such was the author of our religion. And is his character to be explained by imposture or insane enthusiasm ? Does it not bear the unambiguous marks of a heavenly origin?

Perhaps it may be said this character never existed. Then the invention of it is to be explained, and the reception which this fiction met with ; and these perhaps are as difficult of explanation on natural principles, as its real existence. Christ's history bears all the marks of reality; a more frank, simple, unlabored, unostentatious narrative was never penned. Besides, his character, if invented, must have been an invention of singular difficulty, because no models existed on which to frame it. He stands alone in the records of time. The conception of a being, proposing such new and exalted ends, and governed by higher principles, than the progress of

society had developed, implies singular intellectual power. That several individuals should join in equally vivid conceptions of this character; and should not merely describe in general terms the fictitious being to whom it was attributed, but should introduce him into real life, should place him in a great variety of circumstances, in connexion with various ranks of men, with friends and foes, and should in all preserve his identity, show the same great and singular mind always acting in harmony with itself; this is a supposition hardly credible, and, when the circumstances of the writers of the New Testament are considered, seems to be as inexplicable on human principles, as what I before suggested, the composition of Newton's Principia by a savage. The character of Christ, though delineated in an age of great moral darkness, has stood the scrutiny of ages; and in proportion as men's moral sentiments have been refined, its beauty has been more seen and felt. To suppose it invented, is to suppose that its authors, outstripping their age, had attained to a singular delicacy and elevation of moral perception and feeling. But these attainments are not very reconcilable with the character of its authors, supposing it to be a fiction; that is, with the character of habitual liars and impious deceivers.

But we are not only unable to discover power adequate to this invention. There must have been *motives* for it; for men do not make great efforts, without strong motives; and in the whole compass of human incitements, we challenge the infidel to suggest any, which could have prompted to the work now to be explained.

Once more, it must be recollected, that this invention,

if it were one, was received as real, at a period so near to the time ascribed to Christ's appearance, that the means of detecting it were infinite. That men should send out such a forgery, and that it should prevail and triumph, are circumstances not easily reconcilable with the principles of our nature.

The character of Christ then was real. Its reality is the only explanation of the mighty revolution produced by his religion. And how can you account for it, but by that cause to which he always referred it, a mission from the Father?

Next to the character of Christ, *his Religion* might be shown to abound in circumstances which contradict and repel the idea of a human origin. For example, its representations of the paternal character of God ; its inculcation of a universal charity ; the stress which it lays on inward purity; its substitution of a spiritual worship for the forms and ceremonies, which everywhere had usurped the name, and distinguished the life of religion; its preference of humility, and of the mild, unostentatious, passive virtues, to the dazzling qualities which had monopolized men's admiration; its consistent and bright discoveries of immortality ; its adaptation to the wants of man as a sinner ; its adaptation to all the conditions, capacities, and sufferings of human nature; its pure, sublime, yet practicable morality; its high and generous motives ; and its fitness to form a character, which plainly prepares for a higher life than the present ; these are peculiarities of Christianity, which will strike us more and more, in proportion as we understand distinctly the

circumstances of the age and country in which this religion appeared, and for which no adequate human cause has been or can be assigned.

Passing over these topics, each of which might be enlarged into a discourse, I will make but one remark on this religion, which strikes my own mind very forcibly. Since its introduction, human nature has made great progress, and society experienced great changes ; and in this advanced condition of the world, Christianity, instead of losing its application and importance, is found to be more and more congenial and adapted to man's nature and wants. Men have outgrown the other institutions of that period when Christianity appeared, its philosophy, its modes of warfare, its policy, its public and private economy; but Christianity has never shrunk as intellect has opened, but has always kept in advance of men's faculties, and unfolded nobler views in proportion as they have ascended. The highest powers and affections, which our nature has developed, find more than adequate objects in this religion. Christianity is indeed peculiarly fitted to the more improved stages of society, to the more delicate sensibilities of refined minds, and especially to that dissatisfaction with the present state, which always grows with the growth of our moral powers and affections. As men advance in civilization, they become susceptible of mental sufferings, to which ruder ages are strangers; and these Christianity is fitted to assuage. Imagination and intellect become more restless; and Christianity brings them tranquillity by the eternal and magnificent truths, the solemn and unbounded prospects, which it unfolds. This fitness of our religion to

more advanced stages of society than that in which it was introduced, to wants of human nature not then developed, seems to me very striking. The religion bears the marks of having come from a being who perfectly understood the human mind, and had power to provide for its progress. This feature of Christianity is of the nature of prophecy. It was an anticipation of future and distant ages; and when we consider among whom our religion sprung, where, but in God, can we find an explanation of this peculiarity?

I have now offered a few hints on the character of Christ, and on the character of his religion; and before quitting these topics, I would observe, that they form a strong presumption in favor of the miraculous facts of the christian history. These miracles were not wrought by a man, whose character, in other respects, was ordinary. They were acts of a being, whose mind was as singular as his works, who spoke and acted with more than human authority, whose moral qualities and sublime purposes were in accordance with superhuman powers. Christ's miracles are in unison with his whole character, and bear a proportion to it, like that which we observe in the most harmonious productions of nature; and in this way they receive from it great confirmation. And the same presumption in their favor arises from his religion. That a religion, carrying in itself such marks of divinity, and so inexplicable on human principles, should receive outward confirmations from omnipotence, is not surprising. The extraordinary character of the religion accords with, and seems to demand, extraordinary interpositions in its behalf. Its miracles are not solitary, naked, un-

explained, disconnected events, but are bound up with a system, which is worthy of God, and impressed with God; which occupies a large space, and is operating with great and increasing energy, in human affairs.

As yet I have not touched on what seems to many writers the strongest proofs of Christianity, I mean the *direct evidences of its miracles*, by which we mean the testimony borne to them, including the character, conduct, and condition of the witnesses. These I have not time to unfold; nor is this labor needed; for Paley's inestimable work, which is one of your classical books, has stated these proofs with great clearness and power. I would only observe, that they may all be resolved into this single principle, namely, that the christian miracles were originally believed under such circumstances, that this belief can only be explained by their actual occurrence. That Christianity was received at first on the ground of miracles, and that its first preachers and converts proved the depth and strength of their conviction of these facts, by attesting them in sufferings and in death, we know from the most ancient records, which relate to this religion, both christian and heathen; and, in fact, this conviction can alone explain their adherence to Christianity. Now that this conviction could only have sprung from the reality of the miracles, we infer from the known circumstances of these witnesses, whose passions, interests, and strongest prejudices, were originally hostile to the new religion; whose motives for examining with care the facts on which it rested were as urgent and solemn, and whose means and opportunities of ascertaining their truth

were as ample and unfailing, as can be conceived to conspire ; so that the supposition of their falsehood cannot be admitted, without subverting our trust in human judgment and human testimony under the most favorable circumstances for discovering truth ; that is, without introducing universal skepticism.

There is one class of christian evidences, to which I have but slightly referred, but which has struck with peculiar force men of reflecting minds. I refer to the marks of truth and reality, which are found in the *Christian records ;* to the internal proofs which the books of the New Testament carry with them, of having been written by men, who lived in the first age of Christianity, who believed and felt its truth, who bore a part in the labors and conflicts which attended its establishment, and who wrote from personal knowledge and deep conviction. A few remarks to illustrate the nature and power of these internal proofs, which are furnished by the books of the New Testament, I will now subjoin.

The New Testament consists of histories and epistles. The historical books, namely, the Gospels and Acts, are a continued narrative, embracing many years, and professing to give the history of the rise and progress of the religion. Now it is worthy of observation, that these writings completely answer their end; that they completely solve the problem, how this peculiar religion grew up and established itself in the world; that they furnish precise and adequate causes for this stupendous revolution in human affairs. It is also worthy of remark, that they relate a series of facts, which are not only connected with

one another, but are intimately linked with the long series which has followed them, and agree accurately with subsequent history, so as to account for and sustain it. Now that a collection of *fictitious* narratives, coming from different hands, comprehending many years, and spreading over many countries, should not only form a consistent whole, when taken by themselves ; but should also connect and interweave themselves with real history so naturally and intimately, as to furnish no clue for detection, as to exclude the appearance of incongruity and discordance, and as to give an adequate explanation and the only explanation of acknowledged events, of the most important revolution in society ; this is a supposition, from which an intelligent man at once revolts, and which, if admitted, would shake a principal foundation of history.

I have before spoken of the unity and consistency of Christ's character as developed in the Gospels, and of the agreement of the different writers in giving us the singular features of his mind. Now there are the same marks of truth running through the whole of these narratives. For example, the effects produced by Jesus on the various classes of society ; the different feelings of admiration, attachment, and envy, which he called forth; the various expressions of these feelings; the prejudices, mistakes, and gradual illumination of his disciples; these are all given to us with such marks of truth and reality as could not easily be counterfeited. The whole history is precisely such, as might be expected from the actual appearance of such a person as Jesus Christ, in such a state of society as then existed.

The Epistles, if possible, abound in marks of truth and reality even more than the Gospels. They are imbued thoroughly with the spirit of the first age of Christianity. They bear all the marks of having come from men, plunged in the conflicts which the new religion excited, alive to its interests, identified with its fortunes. They betray the very state of mind, which must have been generated by the peculiar condition of the first propagators of the religion. They are letters written on real business, intended for immediate effects, designed to meet prejudices and passions, which such a religion must at first have awakened. They contain not a trace of the circumstances of a later age, or of the feelings, impressions, and modes of thinking by which later times were characterized, and from which later writers could not easily have escaped. The letters of Paul have a remarkable agreement with his history. They are precisely such as might be expected from a man of a vehement mind, who had been brought up in the schools of Jewish literature, who had been converted by a sudden, overwhelming miracle, who had been intrusted with the preaching of the new religion to the Gentiles, and who was everywhere met by the prejudices and persecuting spirit of his own nation. They are full of obscurities growing out of these points of Paul's history and character, and out of the circumstances of the infant church, and which nothing but an intimate acquaintance with that early period can illustrate. This remarkable infusion of the spirit of the first age into the christian records cannot easily be explained but by the fact, that they were written in that age by the real and zealous propagators of Christianity,

and that they are records of real convictions and of actual events.

There is another evidence of Christianity, still more internal than any on which I have yet dwelt, an evidence to be *felt* rather than described, but not less real, because founded on feeling. I refer to that conviction of the divine original of our religion, which springs up and continually gains strength in those who apply it habitually to their tempers and lives, and who imbibe its spirit and hopes. In such men, there is a consciousness of the adaptation of Christianity to their noblest faculties; a consciousness of its exalting and consoling influences, of its power to confer the true happiness of human nature, to give that peace, which the world cannot give; which assures them that it is not of earthly origin, but a ray from the Everlasting Light, a stream from the fountain of Heavenly Wisdom and Love. This is the evidence which sustains the faith of thousands, who never read and cannot understand the learned books of christian apologists, who want, perhaps, words to explain the ground of their belief, but whose faith is of adamantine firmness, who hold the gospel with a conviction more intimate and unwavering, than *mere* argument ever produced.

But I must tear myself from a subject, which opens upon me continually as I proceed.—Imperfect as this discussion is, the conclusion, I trust, is placed beyond doubt that Christianity is true. And, my hearers, if true, it is the greatest of all truths, deserving and demanding our reverent attention and fervent gratitude. This religion must never be confounded with our common blessings.

It is a revelation of pardon, which, as sinners, we all need. Still more, it is a revelation of human immortality; a doctrine, which, however undervalued amidst the bright anticipations of inexperienced youth, is found to be our strength and consolation, and the only effectual spring of persevering and victorious virtue, when the realities of life have scattered our visionary hopes; when pain, disappointment, and temptation press upon us; when this world's enjoyments are found unable to quench that deep thirst of happiness which burns in every breast; when friends whom we love as our own souls, die; and our own graves open before us. — To all who hear me, and especially to my young hearers, I would say, let the truth of this religion be the strongest conviction of your understandings; let its motives and precepts sway with an absolute power your characters and lives.

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CAUSES OF THE PROGRESS

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CAUSES, &c.

WHERE a people for a long succession of years have been making a steady, continual and unexampled progress in religious inquiry, it is but reasonable to refer it to causes deeply seated in those institutions which distinguish them from other nations, and in their fixed and peculiar habits of thinking and acting. The history of religious opinions in this section of our country presents, as I conceive, a striking illustration of the justness of this remark. Never has there been a change greater or more remarkable; but the careful and attentive observer will be able to trace it, without much difficulty, to the operation of the same general causes, to which we are likewise indebted for almost everything else, that distinguishes the condition, or the character, of the people of New England. I have thought it would be useful to consider some of these causes; and to point out the bearing and influence they have had on the progress of Liberal Christianity.

I do not mean by this, that the progress of Liberal Christianity has been confined to a particular spot. Ow-

ing to the liberal tendencies of our government, and all our public institutions, and to the general diffusion of knowledge and a spirit of inquiry through the community, it has undoubtedly been making progress in every part of our country; and owing, also, to the liberal tendencies of the age, and the advancement of society and the human mind, it has, at the same time, been making progress in every part of the world. My only object, therefore, is to mention some of the causes, which have made this progress more rapid, and more observable here, than elsewhere; and to show, that these causes are the same, which have contributed to the advancement of New England in all other respects.

The first of these causes may be found in the character of our Puritan ancestors, and in the impulse which their example gave to religious inquiry, and religious liberty.

They were consistent *Protestants;* called Puritans, says a cotemporary, because they 'would have the church thoroughly reformed; that is, purged from all those inventions, which have been brought into it since the age of the apostles, and reduced entirely to the Scripture purity.' 'Nothing was more disagreeable to them,' says the author of the New England Chronology, 'than to be called by the name of any mere man whatever, since they renounced all attachment to any mere human systems or expositions of Scripture, and reserved an entire and perpetual liberty of searching the inspired records, and of forming both their principles and practice from those discoveries they should make therein, without imposing them on others.' It is not pretended that the

rights of private judgment were understood then, as they are understood now. Even Hume, however, though he despised their superstition, and detested most of their political leanings, is yet constrained to pass on the Independents the high eulogium, that 'of all christian sects this was the first, which during its prosperity, as well as its adversity, always adopted the principle of toleration.'

Besides, our fathers were not only Protestants, but Protestant *dissenters;* 'rooters,' as they were sometimes scornfully termed by their enemies, an appellation still more pointed and significant, than the modern term, 'radical.' It matters not what were the particular doctrines, or what the particular practices, on account of which they separated from the Established Church; it is the effect of their example as separatists, that we are considering. It was not the wearing of the surplice, or the kneeling at the altar, that they objected to, so much as the authority that would impose them, and the danger of the precedent, should they once submit to the imposition. It was the bold and vigorous stand they made against arbitrary power; their determination to live and die by the principle, that the Scriptures are the only authority to be acknowledged in religious matters, reserving to themselves the right of judging what Scripture is, and what Scripture means; it was their determined and prompt resistance to all usurpations over the mind and conscience, in whatever shape they might come, and however trivial in their first demands, which stamped the character of the men, and, I may add, the character of the race. It was not their peculiar opinions, nor their peculiar practices, which they transmitted to their descendants; but, what

they valued more than either, their peculiar spirit; and this I trust will live in us, and be cherished by us, as long as a drop of their blood flows in our veins.

But it was not merely a courage to assert and defend the right of private judgment, that distinguished our Puritan ancestors, but a much rarer quality—a courage to exercise this right. Though setting a high and just value on Luther's Reformation, they did not think that Luther's Reformation had made them so wise, that the word of God might not make them wiser. They had early fallen under the censure of Elizabeth, as being 'overbold with the Almighty, making too many scannings of his blessed will, as lawyers did with human testaments.' When they came to a determination to establish themselves here, we have abundant documents to prove, that it was with a strong presentiment, a confident expectation, that God had, as they themselves beautifully expressed it, 'more truth yet to break forth out of his holy word.' They evidently looked forward to the time, when the poor churches, which they were planting in the wilderness, would take the lead in a much more thorough reformation, than had yet been attempted. Whether this expectation was well or ill founded, it had this important practical effect on those who indulged it. It led them to study the Scriptures with less prejudice, and a more careful scrutiny; believing that they might find there, what they had never found there before. The impulse, which this gave to religious inquiry, has been perpetuated; and we have but yielded to it in coming to the opinions, which we now hold.

I say again, therefore, that one cause which has made

the progress of Liberal Christianity more rapid, and more observable here, than elsewhere, is to be found in the character of our Puritan ancestors, and in the impulse which their example gave to religious inquiry, and religious liberty. It is time for men to be done with the senseless clamor, that we have departed from the principles of the fathers of New England. If it is merely meant by this, that we have been able to make some progress in religious knowledge during the two long centuries that have intervened, is this any cause of wonder? Is this a proper ground of accusation? Nay, is this anything more than what, as we have seen, our fathers themselves expected? Besides, it is nothing to the purpose to prove, that our opinions and practices are different from theirs; for the circumstances are also different. It must be shown, that our opinions and practices would have been different from theirs, had they been placed in the same circumstances. The question is, whether we are in the same progress, not whether we are in the same *stage* of the progress; for, supposing us to be in progress, this *must* alter from age to age. The question is, whether we are men of the same cast of character; and being so, whether it is possible for us to hold different opinions from what we do, in the present advanced state of society and the human mind. For who were our fathers?—Were they the men who thought that the Reformation had gone far enough? No.—Were they the men, who conceived that nothing more was to be learned from the Bible? No.—Were they the men tamely to acquiesce in the imposition of a creed, which the age had outgrown? No.—Were they the men to shrink from an avowal of their

dissent from popular and long established errors, from a dread of the cry of innovation? No. All history answers, No. Neither are we; and it is because we are not, that we hold our present position in the religious world; and should we ever desert it from timidity, or betray it from inconstancy, we prove ourselves, by that act, unworthy of our name and race. I believe, as I believe I live, that if the fathers of New England, if Robinson and Higginson, Bradford and Winthrop, had been born two hundred years later, they would have been found among our warmest and most effective coadjutors. And in that cloud of witnesses, who have finished their testimony, and are now looking down on the struggles and triumphs of truth in this world, I believe, as I believe I live, that there are none, who will behold with more joy than they, that the impulse, which their example gave to religious inquiry and religious liberty, has not been lost on the generations that have followed them.

The second cause, which I shall mention as making the progress of Liberal Christianity more rapid and more observable in New England, than elsewhere, is to be found in the popular cast of our religious institutions.

It is remarkable, that the principle of independency has been adopted in the prevailing form of church government nowhere else, but in New England. Here, however, our ancestors took special care, that the privilege should be secured; and watched with a searching jealousy every motion in church or state, that threatened its infringement. To the demands of popes, or bishops, or councils, or synods, or consistories, or presbyteries, they had but

one answer to make, and that was always ready. 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?' They conceived, that every congregation of Christians possessed within itself all ecclesiastical powers and faculties; to be exercised and applied according to the will of the whole, or, in case they were divided, of a majority of its members. To preserve a community of interest, protection and fellowship, they did, indeed, make it the duty of every such church to consult the neighboring churches in all important events, such as the ordination of a minister; and in all cases of difficulty, or internal dissension; and to follow the advice given them, provided they thought it good advice; but it was expressly forbidden them to submit to it as authority. I find it stated thus in one of their old books: If a church in a citie and the officers thereof, be of more eminent gifts and graces, than a church in a village, it is a just occasion for the church in the village to listen the more after the *counsel* of the church in the citie; but not to submit the more unto their *authority*. And so it is true, a classis of the presbyters of *many* churches may excel (in more variety of all abilities) than the presbyterie of any *one* church; yet that only reacheth to make their counsel the more weighty and acceptable, but not to invest them with more rule, or more authority.' Nay, so jealous were they, in the early settlement of the country, of any association menacing the boasted independency of their churches, that when it was understood, that the ministers of Boston and the vicinity were in the habit of meeting once a fortnight at each other's houses, where some question was commonly debated, the practice was much frowned

on by the ministers of Salem; on the ground, as they said, that 'it would grow into a presbytery, or superintendency, to the prejudice of the church liberties.'

It was this everwakeful suspicion, this unconquerable dread of everything like ecclesiastical consociations and tribunals, to which our churches are indebted not only for much of the liberty they enjoy, but also for much of the progress they have made in religious inquiry. As it was, we know that the almost unbounded influence of Cotton, and others of the clergy of that day, gave occasion for serious alarm to the leading men of the colony; and nothing but this determination of the people to preserve their congregational independency could have presented an effectual barrier to the encroachments of that most subtle, plausible, and imposing of all usurpations, I mean, the usurpation of the priesthood. Could they have succeeded in establishing a spiritual court — a court claiming and exercising authority over ministers and churches, over faith and conscience, like all other courts of the kind, its first act would probably have been to decree a cessation of intellectual and religious improvement throughout its jurisdiction; and it might have made the difference of a century in the advancement of the mind on the prohibited subjects. True it might, and it probably would have disclaimed the use of the civil arm. It might have had nothing to do with racks, and fagots, and dungeons, the common accompaniment of persecution in the old world. But there may be a tyranny, where there is no visible tyranny. Men may be enslaved by the use that is made of their fears, prejudices, and superstitions. The conscience may be shackled,

while the body is free. Men may wear their fetters in their souls. And that it has not been so with the people of New England, has been owing not a little to the popular and independent cast of our religious institutions.

We do not pretend, that our fathers were free from the errors and the bigotry common to their times; but there is one thing, in which they differed from all their cotemporaries, and which entitles them to the gratitude and veneration of their posterity. Though they had their errors and their bigotry, they did not seek to entail them on their descendants, by incorporating them into formularies and creeds, that were to be of perpetual obligation. They left their views of religion, such as they were; but they left them without any obstacle to their correction and amendment, whenever this should become necessary to accommodate them to the progressive illumination of the human mind. Compare our condition in this respect, with that of the English Establishment, from which our fathers separated. The liberal members of that church have eight times attempted its reform, but without the least success; so as to justify the strong language used by one of its most distinguished ornaments, as he looked back on these failures, and in the bitterness of his soul considered that the cause of them was permanent. 'Here, then, hath Terminus fixed his pedestal, and here hath he kept his station for two whole centuries. We are just where the Acts of Uniformity left us, and where, for aught that appears in the temper of the times, the last trumpet will find us.'

No, it will not be so. There is a power at work, stronger—infinitely stronger—than the establishments of

men, which is trying all establishments, as it were, by fire. They may multiply their creeds and subscriptions, until, to use the language of Milton, 'he who would take orders, must subscribe slave, and take an oath withal;' there is that, however, in the *tendencies* of society and the human mind, which tells us that they cannot be forever resisted. But though creeds and establishments cannot stop the progress of truth, they may, and they will, obstruct its natural and regular progress; and it is because they have not existed in our churches to obstruct the natural and regular progress of truth, that Liberal Christianity has made such advances. It is remarkable of Liberal Christianity in New England, that it is almost entirely of domestic growth. It was not brought here; it has grown up spontaneously. Intelligent and thinking men all over the country, without any concert, and with nothing but the Bible for their guide, have been led to adopt liberal views; in some instances without being aware at the time, that there were any other persons in the world holding a similar faith. Nay, I believe it to be undeniable, that wherever all artificial obstructions to free inquiry are removed, Liberal Christianity will spring up spontaneously. Its friends certainly think so; and that its enemies think so too, is proved by the fact of their resorting to these artificial obstructions, avowedly as their only security against its further and universal spread. To account, therefore, for the greater progress which Liberal Christianity has made in New England, than elsewhere, it is only necessary to consider, what all will concede, that there is no other place in the world where so few artificial obstructions exist to the progress of truth.

I have room to consider but one other cause, which has contributed to make the progress of Liberal Christianity more rapid, and more observable in New England, than elsewhere. It is to be found in the interest taken by the people generally, and especially by the thinking and intelligent part of the community, in theological discussions.

Unhappily in most other places the reading and influential classes bestow but little attention on religious inquiries; either from indifference to the whole subject, or from disgust at the forms under which they commonly hear it presented, or from an impression that these are matters to be left to the clergy for them to manage. But in New England it has always been different. From the beginning we find the governors, judges and counsellors mingling with their ministers, and supporting with great ability their own views on points of doctrine and discipline. This, of course, has had the effect to elevate the standard of thought and conversation on religious subjects; and this again has stimulated the clergy to greater efforts, that they might bring their preaching up to this standard; so that two good influences have been exerted, and these, also, of a kind to act and re-act perpetually on one another. As a general rule, the preaching in any place will be what public sentiment demands, and never much above what public sentiment demands.

There is, also, another effect, which the interest taken by the laity in theological discussions has had on the progress of religious knowledge. We find that where this subject has occupied the minds, as well as affected the hearts of laymen, their studies have commonly resulted

in their embracing liberal sentiments. I might here refer, if it were necessary, to the immortal names of Newton, Milton, and Locke; who are known to have given the whole force of their prodigious powers to the investigation of religious truth, and to have rested at last in the adoption of liberal principles. I might also say the same of some of the most distinguished statesmen, and jurists, and general scholars of our own country, living and dead. Nor is it difficult to account for the fact that the religious inquiries of laymen should more frequently terminate in the adoption of liberal views, than those of the clergy; as laymen must be supposed to be more free from sectarian biases, and to have fewer personal interests to warp the judgment, perhaps unconsciously; and besides, the layman derives an advantage from an intimate acquaintance with the world and human nature, which the divine, with his reserved and recluse habits, can hardly hope to acquire. As, therefore, there is no place in the world where the opinions of laymen have had so much influence in deciding the public mind on the subject of religion, as in New England, we cannot wonder at the prevalence it has given to Liberal Christianity. I may also be permitted to add, that as the testimony of laymen for the truth of Christianity in general, other things being equal, is admitted by all to be of more weight than the testimony of the clergy, inasmuch as the former cannot be suspected of professional leanings; so likewise their testimony for any particular form of Christianity is deserving of the more regard for the same reason.

The truth is, that the change which has taken place in religious opinions in this quarter is owing much more to

what the people have done, than to what the clergy have done. The clergy, as a body, never yet led the way in improvement, and never will. Here, as elsewhere, the people were before them, and are before them, and probably always will be before them. It is much the fashion with some men not unfriendly on the whole to Liberal Christianity, to speak however of the change it has introduced, as a great and hazardous experiment. But who are referred to, as trying this experiment? The clergy? If so, it is contradicted by what we have just said. Besides, it is in no proper sense an experiment, that any body is trying. It is no more an experiment, than the revival of letters was an experiment. It is no more an experiment, than the Reformation under Luther was an experiment. It is no more an experiment, than the American Revolution was an experiment. It is the natural, and I may add, the necessary consequence of an advanced state of society in every other kind of knowledge, enabling and requiring it to make a corresponding advancement in religious knowledge. It is not the work of passion or caprice, nor the influence of a few powerful individuals, nor any preconcerted plan of a refined policy; but the natural and necessary result of the progress of the human mind. It is the progress of mind; and this again has been carried on by the combined action of a million of causes operating together as certainly and irresistibly as the laws of nature.

Thus do I trace the rise and progress of Liberal Christianity in New England to the same general causes, to which we are also indebted for almost everything else, that distinguishes our condition as a highly favored people.

Well may we have confidence in views, that are making progress in the world by such means. And as we profess to hold doctrines, that approach nearer than any others to the instructions of our blessed Lord, let us endeavor to make our characters and our lives approach as much nearer to his example. It has long been felt that Christianity is destined, in the providence of God, to affect much more directly and powerfully the social and moral condition of mankind, than any of its forms heretofore established have evinced a capacity for doing. If we have found that form which possesses this capacity, let it appear. Let it elevate the tone of moral feeling in the community. Let it save our youth from the pollutions of a sensual life. Let it make the conduct of our men of standing and influence more decidedly religious and christian. Let it reform and purify the public amusements, which have so much to do in forming the character of a people. Let it increase the abhorrence felt against war, and against all the anti-christian practices of communities and states. Over all, and above all, let it induce a spirit of humble, ardent, and enlightened piety. Then shall be fulfilled the prediction of our fathers; that in the feeble churches, which they were planting in a strange land, there should spring up a light, such as had never dawned on the corrupt establishments of the old world. Nor will its blessed influences be confined to any kindred, or country, or tongue. But He, who ruleth in the earth, 'shall destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.'

No. 10.

REMARKS

ON A

POPULAR ERROR

RESPECTING

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

BY F. W. P. GREENWOOD.

SECOND EDITION.

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A

POPULAR ERROR, &c.

THERE is hardly a more common, and hardly a more hurtful mistake on the subject of religion, than the belief that its obligations may be assumed or deferred at our pleasure, or, as we sometimes choose to term it, our convenience. Many a one there is, who, like Felix, will take it upon himself without the least fear or shame, to defer the acknowledgment of duty, to dismiss the most serious considerations of life, and bid them come again at another time, a more convenient season. Many a one there is, who, fully aware of his obligations, fully sensible that there is such a thing as duty, and acquainted with its several requirements, yet imagines that he can in some measure evade their demands, and escape from their authority, by neglecting to make a public avowal of his subjection to them; imagines that he can throw off a portion of his responsibility, by withholding his confession of it. Just as if his assent or his silence made any difference in his moral situation; as if he really possessed the right of thus trifling and dallying with the service of God.

This strange and pernicious error I shall now endeavor to expose, as fully and satisfactorily as lies in my power; and if I should fail in the attempt of convincing others, it will not be because the total strength of my own conviction is not enlisted and heartily engaged in the cause.

In the first place, let us see what is the origin, and what the extent of human obligation. Its origin is obviously to be carried up to the Being by whose will we are placed in this world. Our existence, faculties, perceptions, and pleasures, are all derived from God. All that we possess is his free endowment and gift, and he is therefore the first and supreme object of our duty; and as he is perfectly good and wise, as he has never acted unjustly towards any one of us, and consequently never forfeited the minutest particle of his right over us, our obligations toward him are constant and entire, as constant as breath, and as comprehensive as the capacities of our nature and the circumstances of our being. As long as we live, we are the subjects of the King of kings; and as his right over us is unquestionable and unlimited, the extent of our duty is to do at all times and with all our heart, precisely what he requires us to do.

The next question is, what does God require of us? "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" This is a summary of our obligations, pronounced by one of his own prophets. In his revealed word, the particulars of our duty are sufficiently explained. It is there that we must look for them, and it is hardly possible to misunderstand them. It is not in the least degree necessary

for me, while on this subject, to enumerate them. Suffice it to say, that it is the duty of all men to cherish every amiable and holy feeling, and to practise all the virtues; or, to speak more strictly and properly, it is the duty of every one to *endeavor* to do this, earnestly, faithfully, and sincerely. Whatever is good, that we should strive to do, or be; whatever is bad, that we should dismiss or avoid, as quickly and as effectually as we can. It is our duty to aim at perfect righteousness, perfect virtue; and, as I have shown from the nature of our relation with the Deity, this is our duty at all times, and under all circumstances, in youth and in age, in prosperity and in want, in gladness and in grief.

And now let me ask, how these obligations are to be postponed? How, on the one hand, are they to be assumed, and on the other, how are they to be delayed or set aside? it seems to me to be trifling with the declarations of God, and the condition of humanity, to talk of a right, or an ability, or an intention to do either. How can that be assumed, which was imposed upon us at our birth? How can that be delayed or set aside, which from its very nature can neither be averted, nor in any way altered or moved? We begin existence as the subjects of God, and at no one period of life are we more under his government and jurisdiction than at any other; in what possible manner, then, does it belong to us to say, that now we will not be amenable to his laws, and now, by our own free thought and pleasure, we will place ourselves under his authority?

The reader will have perceived, ere this, the particular point which I have had in view; and I will therefore

enter at once on the subject to which these general remarks were intended to lead. I hesitate not to acknowledge that I do not understand the propriety of the language so common in the mouths of those who approach for the first time, or who are about to approach for the first time, the communion table of our Saviour. They say that they are going to take on themselves new and solemn obligations. Others, in speaking of the act, express themselves in the same manner. In short, there is no phrase more common. In my opinion, there is none more unmeaning; and I shall continue to think so, till it can be shown to me how it is possible that a creature of God *can* take on himself a *new* religious obligation; how it is possible that by professing his intention to obey the divine commandments, he has added a single one to the list which already existed, and which had bound him down from his cradle with the adamantine strength of condition and necessity.

To say, that this person has just begun to entertain a proper sense of his obligations; that he has received new impressions of his duty, is perfectly correct. He may in time past have scoffed at virtue and religion, and held his own pleasure to be his only law and guide; and now he may see the folly of such a course, and repent of it, and turn to the Lord his God, humbling himself before him, and resolving to keep his commandments. But still he has taken on himself no new obligations. He was as much obliged to perform all his duty before this change of feeling, as he is now. The obligations were always upon him, every one of them; but instead of being treated, as before, with neglect and contumely, they are now soberly and rightly apprehended. What I mean to say,

is, that though to acknowledge is infinitely better than to slight them, neither their nature nor their number, the r strength nor their degree, is altered in the least. The individual, let us suppose, was formerly profane; now, having made a profession of faith, he sets a guard upon his lips; but was it not as much his duty to observe the third commandment then, as it is now? Was it not criminal then? Has his confession of its criminality increased it? Has he really such a power over right and wrong?

This is perhaps an extreme case. Let us attend to a more common one. There are those, who, without having ever been notoriously bad, who indeed have gone along through life commendably and with fair reputations, have nevertheless refused to come to the communion table, because they had no idea of giving up a certain way of living, which so long as they abstain from a profession of religion, they pursue without scruple, as being perfectly harmless, but which they regard, and which is generally regarded, as inconsistent with such a profession. They like to be gay, gay in spirit, and gay in external appearance; they are passionately fond of dancing; they delight in going to splendid entertainments, and in splendidly entertaining their friends in return, and they will not accept the invitation of their Saviour, because they conceive that by so doing they render that course criminal, which, till they do so, is perfectly safe. Now, I presume not to say, that the way of life which they love is not innocent; it may, or it may not be so, according as certain rules are observed or transgressed, which it would not be in place to discuss here; but I say, that if their

way of life is innocent before they become visible members of a church, it will also be innocent after that connexion is formed; and if, on the other hand, it would be criminal then, it is assuredly criminal now. What is right is right, and is not made more right by any confession. What is wrong is wrong, and cannot be made right, by our backwardness to abjure it.

All that has been said of pleasure, may be applied to business. The man of trade hesitates to come to the altar, because he does not wish to encumber himself with any religious shackles in his road to wealth. He does not wish to enter into any *new obligations*, which may render his pursuits guilty or improper, and prevent him from following them. In his present situation he feels easy, feels that he is doing what others of good character do, feels that he is bustling along with the throng, and no more obliged to be scrupulous and nicely fastidious than his companions and competitors. If he should openly profess himself to be a disciple of Christ, why then indeed he must take heed and inquire of his conscience more frequently, and guard his purity more carefully than before; but as this might be inconvenient and troublesome, he will postpone the engagement and avoid the risk. Does he avoid the risk? Will his approach to the altar, make those practices dishonorable which used to be upright? Will his absenting himself from the altar make the transaction fair, which, if he went to it, would be a blot on his name? Is virtue of this versatile character?

There is still another class of persons who delay their obedience to the last injunction of Christ, on account of

the prevalent ideas about new obligations. It is that class who omit to do right, from the fear of doing wrong; a class among whom we find some of the most valuable members of society, some of the most conscientious and pure-minded servants of God. Desirous as they are of performing their duty; strict as they have always been in discharging their known obligations, they are deterred from joining in a solemn remembrance of their Master, from an impression that it will render them responsible in some additional manner, which they know not how to define, but to which their poor ability may not be equal. To such persons I would earnestly repeat what I have said in substance before; that whatever they esteem and practise as virtuous now, will lose none of its virtue after they have become communicants, for that which is holy will be holy still; and that it is absolutely impossible, that they can, by any act, or confession, or subscription, engage to do a single thing which was not always their duty, as rational creatures of God.

That I may be somewhat more circumstantial, I would ask them whether any thing can be named or imagined, which is superadded to their existing obligations by the act of christian communion? Is it a generous and extensive bounty, and an ever open hand of charity to the poor? But it was for ever their duty to be as bountiful and as charitable as occasion would demand, and their means would justify. Is it that they should devote a certain portion of their time to self-examination, reflection, and prayer? But just such a portion as their spiritual welfare required, and their necessary occupations

permitted, was always exacted of them, or I entirely misunderstand the spirit and letter of the Gospel. Is it that they should assiduously attend upon the outward means of grace; that they should be constant in their place at church; that they should be found at all meetings called for religious purposes, and adapted to promote religious ends? But all that they could do in this way before, consistently with their real good, and with the duty which they owed to their own families, and the obligations which chained them to their own hearths and domestic altars, they ought to have done; and more than this, let me add, they ought never to do; for it then swells into an excess, and is converted into dissipation, and may, not uncharitably, be called a sin. So it is with regard to conversation, demeanor and dress. In each of these particulars there is a general standard of propriety, which ought never to be transgressed by a wide departure from it on either side. Frivolity and flippancy, levity and extravagance, are errors in any one; and an unnatural gloominess and stiffness, a dark and funereal habit of feature and gesture, required by no circumstances, and tending to no good, are also errors, and can be proper in no one. I am wholly at a loss to conceive what course a communicant should pursue, which should not also be pursued by every individual who is acquainted with the revealed word and will of his Maker.

On a subject of this nature it is highly important that I should not be misapprehended. I would guard as carefully as I am able against the supposition, that I would treat the holy communion as a light matter, and represent christian obligation as a loose and easy tie.

On the contrary, it is precisely because I hold religion to be of deep and universal concern, because I know it to be as momentous as life and as serious as death, that I have endeavored to combat the notion that it requires of one what it does not require of all, or that it releases one from what it enjoins on another. It is precisely on account of its unchangeable character, its unlimited application, and its inestimable value, that I have denied that any of its obligations can, properly speaking, be new; that I have denied that they can be thrown off or assumed at pleasure; that I have asserted that our Maker has just as many and as weighty claims on our hearts and lives, before we solemnly acknowledge them, as after such a ceremony. I have not advanced, it ought not to be supposed that I would advance, the smallest word of this essay, in order to make any portion of the community less religious; my sincere wish and prayer is, that the whole community may be more so. If I would chase away shadows, it is only that I may introduce substantial realities in their stead.

I would observe, that there is one circumstance which seems to take off the weight of religious obligation; and that is, unavoidable ignorance. In what has been said, I have all along referred to those who either know or might easily know, what the obligations of religion are. To him who knows them not, the untutored savage for instance, they have no existence; or rather, the same obligations which bind the Christian have no existence. But even the savage is subjected to obligations, according to his knowledge and opportunities; and we may likewise say of him, that no formal acknowledgment

of those obligations will make them greater than they are.

The sole point which I aim to establish, is, that our will and our convenience have no legitimate power over the nature of our duty. It would be as proper for a son to declare that he would not fulfil every filial obligation to his parents, till he appeared in court and took a legal oath that he would do so, as for the native of a christian land to declare that there were duties to his Maker which he did not intend, nor was he required to discharge, till he had openly allowed them; and the son, after having taken such an oath, might talk as consistently about his *new* obligations, as might the Christian, after the promise was passed, about his. They were both of them born with obligations, which neither of them can dismiss nor change; they might as well dismiss the air which they inhaled with their first breath, and throw off the atmosphere which envelopes the world.

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UNITARIANISM VINDICATED.

When all other objections to Unitarianism fail, it is common for opponents to say, that this system is very well as far it goes, but it does not go far enough. This objection has really had a good deal of influence on common and weak minds; not because it has been understood, or is well founded, but because it is one which any body can make, and every body remembers; besides, as it specifies nothing, and seems to relate rather to imperfection, than to anything positively wrong, it is, for this reason, at once more likely to be admitted, and more difficult to expose or repel. These considerations have induced me to undertake, in the following pages, to vindicate Unitarianism from the charge of not going far enough; and this I shall do by showing, that it goes far enough for Scripture, far enough for safety, and far enough for moral effect.

I. Unitarianism goes far enough for Scripture.

I begin by distinctly stating the true reason why Unitarians do not go any further. It is the same with that

assigned by the seer for not cursing Israel : 'If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad of my own mind.' We must keep to 'the simplicity that is in Christ.' We would not shun 'to declare all the counsel of God ;' but we dare not 'teach, for doctrines, the commandments of men.' We endeavor to follow the Scriptures in all things, and the true and only reason why, as Christians, we do not go any further, is our solemn, firm, and deliberative conviction, that the Scriptures do not go any further. This I shall show to be the principle, on which Unitarians proceed in forming the views they entertain of the person and authority of Jesus Christ, and of the honor due him, and of the reconciliation or atonement he has effected.

1. We believe in Jesus Christ as a Divine Messenger ; that his power and authority are divine, and that his words are to be regarded as the words of God. We believe him to be the 'only begotten Son' of God,; and, when he says, (John, x. 30,) 'I and my Father are one,' we also believe him ; understanding this language as it is explained by himself in another passage, where, interceding with the Father for his disciples, he prays, (John, xvii. 22,) 'that they may be one, even as we are one' — one in purpose, counsel, and coöperation. But we cannot go any further, because we think that the Scriptures do not ; nay, that they expressly forbid it.

The plain and obvious sense of the sacred writings will not permit us to regard Jesus Christ, as the omnipotent, omniscient, and self-existent God. For an apostle has said, (1 Cor. viii. 6,) 'to us there is but *one* God, *the*

Father;' and to the same purpose, also, our Lord himself, in a prayer addressed expressly to the *Father*, (John, xvii. 3,) 'This is life eternal, that they might know *thee, the only true God.*' In another place, also, he declares, in so many words, his own inferiority, (John, xiv. 28,) 'For my Father is *greater than I;*' and he is so far from pretending to omniscience, that he expressly disclaims in more than one instance: (Mark, xiii. 32,) 'But of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, *neither the Son*, but the Father.' Again, it is the uniform doctrine of Scripture that Jesus Christ is a *dependent* being. His own words are, (John, v. 30,) 'I can *of mine own self* do nothing.' And in another place, (John, xii. 49,) 'For I have not spoken *of myself;* but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.' So, likewise, at the resurrection of Lazarus, (John, xi. 41, 42,) 'Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that *thou hast heard me;* and I know that thou hearest me *always:*' plainly intimating that he derived the power by which he wrought, not only this, but all his other wonderful works, from above. Nay, take the passage that asserts our Lord's power and authority more strongly than any other in God's word: (Matthew, xxviii. 18,) 'And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, All power *is given* unto me in heaven and in earth.' To maintain, in the face of this Scripture, that his power was not 'given' him, that it was not a delegated power, that he was not dependent for it on another being, seems to us an open and palpable contempt of revelation.

2. We believe that Jesus Christ should be revered and obeyed, by all men, as their teacher and Lord, the head of the church, and the Saviour of the world. We believe, also, that 'all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father;' because the Son is the representative of the Father, and the dignity of every government is always supposed to reside in its accredited representatives. We hold, moreover, that, in gratitude for the inestimable benefits resulting from his mediation, and for the sufferings voluntarily undergone by him in procuring and dispensing these benefits, and for the relation which he still sustains towards us, as our advocate and intercessor with the Father, every devout believer must be drawn to him by a love, that knows no measure nor intermission. But we cannot go any further, being convinced that the Scriptures do not, and that they expressly forbid it.

We cannot, we dare not worship Christ as the Supreme Being. In a form of prayer, given by our Lord to his disciples, (Matthew, vi. 9—13,) with the express direction that they should pray 'after this manner,' there is not the remotest allusion to any other person, as an object of worship, but 'Our *Father* which art in heaven.' In another place, referring to what should be after his resurrection, he says, in express terms, (John, xvi. 23,) 'In that day, ye shall ask *me* nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask *the Father* in my name, *he* will give it you.' It is true, the Gospels mention a single instance of prayer offered to Jesus as an ultimate object of regard — the prayer of the mother of Zebedee's children, that they might sit, one on his right hand, and the other on the left, in his kingdom; but the answer he

gave on that occasion convinces us, not only that such prayers are improper, but that he has no power to grant them. (Matthew, xx. 23,) 'To sit on my right hand, and on my left, *is not mine to give;* but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my *Father.*' Nay, he appears anxious to multiply guards against this well known propensity in man to stop at second causes, and pay those honors to the visible agent or dispenser, of any good, which are due only to the invisible First Cause. When one kneeled to him in the eastern manner of salutation, and addressed him by the common appellation, Good master,' he rebuked him: (Mark, x. 18,) 'Why callest thou *me* good? There is none good but one, God.'

3. We look upon the sufferings of Christ, and especially his cruel and ignominious death, as the means by which he was made perfect, (Hebrews, ii. 10;) as affording a signal attestation to his sincerity, and consequently to his whole history; and as important and necessary for other moral uses. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;' and it is the consciousness of the power of this love, which makes the stricken and penitent soul turn to the cross of Christ with an intense and absorbing interest, which none but those who have felt it can comprehend. We also believe that this voluntary sacrifice of himself may have had a direct influence on God in favor of mankind, similar to that which we ascribe to his intercessions; or, at least, that this, and every such act of obedience and submission, must make his intercessions for us more availing. The proper meaning of the word *atonement*, is reconciliation; and no Unitarian, of whom I have any knowledge, denies

the christian doctrine of reconciliation : to wit, that all obstacles to man's salvation are now so far removed, that every one, who is so disposed, may inherit eternal life by repentance and obedience. On this topic, we can go to this extent, but no further ; being met at every point by plain passages of Scripture, which we are not at liberty to disregard.

We cannot refer our salvation to the death of Christ, or to anything which Christ has done or suffered on our account, as its first cause, since the Scriptures expressly refer it to the antecedent love of the Father. (John, iii. 16,) 'For *God so loved the world*, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' We do regard the sufferings of Christ as part of the *means* of reconciling us to God, but not of reconciling God to us ; for this, or the necessity of this, is not taught in the New Testament. (Rom. v. 10,) 'When we were enemies, *we* were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,' says an Apostle, making us to be the only party requiring a new motive to reconciliation. Above all, we presume not to say, that God *cannot* forgive sin without a satisfaction for sin made by another person ; nor that such a satisfaction has been actually made, so that now the sinner has a right to claim forgiveness, not on the ground of mercy, but of *justice*. We believe that God can and does forgive sin for his own sake. (Isaiah, xliii. 25,) 'I, even I, am he, saith the Lord, that blotteth out thy transgressions *for mine own sake*, and will not remember thy sins.' It is offensive to us to hear men talk of merit in this connexion, real or imputed, believing as we do, that the best of men are to

expect salvation not on the ground of merit of any kind, but as 'the *gift of God.*' And with regard to the condition on which this gift is to be bestowed, we must give up the Bible, or suppose that, at the day of judgment, the question will not turn so much on what has been done for us, as on what each individual has done for himself. (2 Cor. v. 10,) 'For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that *every one* may receive the things done in his body, *according to that he hath done*, whether it be good or bad.' If it be asked, further, why we do not make more use of the word *atonement*, I answer, that we use this term as often as it is used in the New Testament; where it occurs but *once*, (Romans, v. 11,) and then stands for a word in the original, which is everywhere else translated, and more happily, *reconciliation.*

On three great points in controversy, then, we go as far as the Scriptures go; and probably about as far as most others would, if they could be persuaded to examine into their real belief, and leave off using words without affixing to them any distinct ideas. At least, it will appear, from what has been said, that we do not reject any doctrine merely because it is mysterious, unpalatable, or incomprehensible. Some have said that, if they could be convinced that the Bible taught Unitarianism, they would burn it, as unable to afford them any comfort. Others, again, have said that, if they could be convinced that the Bible taught Calvinism, they would throw it away, and follow rather the light of nature, as giving more just and honorable conceptions of the divine character and government. But we look on all such expressions, from whatever quarter they may come, as unnecessary, irreve-

rent, and unbecoming. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' Holding the Scriptures, therefore, to be an authority, from which there is no appeal, if we have shown, that we go as far as the Scriptures go, we have effectually vindicated our principles from the charge of not going far enough. Our opponents, however, may say, that, considering the question respecting the true import of Scripture as being still at issue between us, we do not go far enough for safety, or the moral effect of our doctrines. The plan already marked out will lead us to examine these objections with some care.

II. Unitarianism goes far enough for safety.

When it is said, that we do not go far enough for safety, is it meant, that there is more danger of our believing too little than too much? There are two ways, all will admit, in which Christianity may be corrupted; either by adding to, or taking from its primitive doctrines, as understood and taught by its revered Founder. If we believe too much, the identity of the system is lost, and its character is changed; if we believe too little, the identity of the system is lost, and its character is changed. It becomes an interesting subject of inquiry, therefore, to which of these errors and abuses we are most liable. Judging by what we know from past experience of the propensities of the human mind, to which of these errors and abuses are mankind most prone? On this point, I think, we may venture to say, that the testimony of history is decisive. There is no religion, true or false, which has ever prevailed on the face of the earth, the first and lead-

ing corruptions of which have not been induced by adding to, rather than by taking from, the primitive faith. The religion of the Hindoos was in its origin a pure theism · but this pure theism has long been buried and lost under a continually accumulating mass of superstitions. With respect to the religion of the Jews, I need only refer to the discourses of Jesus for proof, that they made the commandment of the Lord of none effect by incorporating with it their own traditions and rabbinical glosses. Or consider the fate of Christianity itself. Whence arose that stupendous fabric of error and superstition reared by the Church of Rome ? Must it not be admitted, that all these first and leading corruptions sprang from unwarrantable additions, from believing too much ; and never, in any instance, from unwarrantable retrenchments, from believing too little? If, then, in all past time, the work of corrupting the popular religion has been begun and carried on by a propensity in man to add to the primitive faith; if we can scarcely turn to a single page of ecclesiastical history, which does not betray the workings of a passion for the marvellous and the mystical, not to be satisfied with the plain and simple teachings of the word of God ; shall we still be told, that men are naturally more in danger of believing too little than too much ?

But perhaps I have not met the objection fairly. It may mean, not that believing too little is an error, into which we are more likely to fall than the opposite one; but it is a more fatal error, if we do fall into it. ' I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book,' said the faithful and true Witness, ' if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto

him the plagues that are written in this book; and, if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.' (Rev. xxii. 18, 19.) So far, therefore, as the express declarations of Scripture are to be regarded in this discussion, it would seem that the penalty of believing too much, is quite as heavy as the penalty of believing too little; nay, that it is heavier; for all 'the plagues written in this book,' are to be inflicted on the man who believes too much, while the man who believes too little, is only to be cut off from its promises. Besides, what *reason* have we for thinking that there can be more safety in believing too much, than too little? Our safety does not consist in believing little or much, but in believing *the truth;* and whether we believe too little, or too much, will it not carry us equally far from the truth?

There is a confused apprehension in the minds of many persons on this subject, growing out of a mistaken idea, that accumulating articles of faith is like accumulating property. A thousands pounds are required for a particular object; but suppose a man has accumulated more than a thousand pounds; if he has more, of course he has as much, and to have as much is all that is required. In the same way, some will reason, if we believe more than the truth, we certainly believe as much, and to believe as much is all that is required; consequently, we are safe, if we only take care to believe enough. But it must be a very weak mind that is shaken by such a sophism; for there is no analogy whatever in the cases here sup-

posed. When a man has a hundred pounds more than he wants, it is because he has as much money as he wants, and so much more money. But when a man believes more than the truth, it is not because he believes the whole truth, and so much more truth, for this would be a contradiction in terms. The addition is so much error. Nor is this all. By adding error to his creed, not only is the addition so much error, but the truths which he held before must be altered and corrupted, to be made consistent with this error; and the complexion and moral effect of the whole creed is changed. Though, therefore, a man may be said, in common parlance, to believe more than the truth, he cannot, correctly speaking, be said, in this case, to believe as much, nor to believe the truth in any sense. Incorporating error into a man's creed, is like mingling arsenic with a valuable medicine. It is not only increasing the quantity, but it is changing the essential qualities of the compound; converting what was before a health-giving specific, into a deadly poison.

Again, it may be said, that it is the effect of the retrenchments Unitarianism proposes, to derogate from the honor and worship paid the Saviour; for which reason, an error in this extreme, must be more dangerous than an error in the opposite extreme. But why? If Jesus Christ is not God, to honor and worship him as such, is to derogate from the honor and worship due the Father; and, upon any hypothesis, I am sure it must be regarded as an error equally great and dangerous, to derogate from the honor and worship due the Father, as to derogate from the honor and worship due the Son. On this subject, I must think, there is a singular and unaccountable

apathy in the public mind. Assuming that Unitarianism is the doctrine of the gospel, it is no light thing, that this doctrine is rejected, and another substituted for it, which takes much of the glory of a jealous God, and gives it to another ; which requires us to pay divine honors to a created and dependent being, though this, considering the act itself, is neither more nor less than idolatry. I know that this idolatry is commonly excused, even by Unitarians, on the ground that it results from involuntary error. But it should be considered, that, before error can be regarded as *entirely* innocent, it must be shown to be, not only involuntary, but inevitable ; not only that we are sincere in the error, but that we have used all possible means for avoiding it. Before, therefore, a Trinitarian can be acquitted of his idolatry, supposing it to be idolatry, he must not only show that he is sincere in his belief, but also that he has read the Scriptures candidly and carefully, with a single view to ascertain whether they really teach the doctrine, that Jesus Christ is God Almighty. Whether all Trinitarians, or most Trinitarians, have done this, and, therefore, whether they can avail themselves of the plea in question, I leave to be determined by their own consciences. Besides, assuming Unitarianism to be true, what can be more offensive to our Lord, than to see his instructions so strangely misconstrued by his disciples, that he himself is made to intercept a large portion of that honor and worship, which, he has told us again and again, should wholly centre and terminate in the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity.

There is still another form, under which some are fond of presenting this objection; and it is commonly done

with the air of one, who thinks the controversy at an end. According to Unitarianism, a man may be saved, even though he is a Calvinist; but, according to Calvinism, a man cannot be saved, if he is a Unitarian. If, therefore, we are Calvinists and Unitarianism should prove the true doctrine, still we may be saved; but, if we are Unitarians, and Calvinism should prove the true doctrine, we are lost inevitably. Before, however, a Calvinist proceeds to deduce an argument from this view of the subject, he should consider, that, if the argument will prove any thing, it will prove too much, even for him. For, in the same mode of reasoning, the Catholic might say to the Calvinist, 'On your own principles, a man may receive our sacraments, and still be saved; but, on our principles, these sacraments are essential Receive them, then; for, if we are wrong, they will not prevent your salvation; and, if we are right, they are indispensable to it.' Consequently, if we are to give any weight to an objection of this sort, it is nothing that we become Calvinists; we must all become Catholics. The true answer to all such objections is, that they make our safety to depend, not on the truth of our creed, or its moral effect, but on its *exclusiveness* merely. No creed whatever can absolve us from the duty of a diligent and impartial inquiry after the truth; and, if the result of this inquiry is, to convince us that Calvinism is not the truth, we cannot be Calvinists, if we would; and, being convinced that Calvinism is not the gospel, it is no more to us, that according to Calvinism we cannot be saved, than it is, that according to Judaism, or Mahomedanism, we cannot be saved. Besides, when it is said, that, according to Unitarianism a

man may be a Calvinist, and still be saved, it is not meant, that he is as likely to be saved ; for it is not supposed, that his principles are as favorable to virtue, and an enlightened and consistent piety. All that we concede is simply this ; that the Father of the human race will not condemn his fallible offspring to infinite and eternal suffering, merely because of their honest, but erroneous convictions. Now, we ask, will not the Calvinist concede as much ? If he will, the objection falls to the ground, of course; and if he will not, then we say, that, in this very exclusiveness, we find a presumption against his system, which outweighs a thousand times any presumption in its favor, founded on the principle we are considering.

Once more, it may be said, as a last resort, that, if we begin to give up the doctrines of our fathers, we shall never know where to stop. We shall go on giving up doctrine after doctrine, till nothing is left. The tendency of making any retrenchments whatever on the popular faith is to downright infidelity.— I reply to this objection, in the first place, as I did to the preceding, that it is one which a consistent Protestant cannot urge. When Luther renounced the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and the Infallibility of the Church, it was as much a retrenchment on the popular faith, as it is in us to renounce the doctrine of the Trinity. The same cry, therefore, was raised against him ; and there was the same occasion for it; and, if it has any intrinsic weight now, it had just as much intrinsic weight then. Consequently, if this objection is entitled to any consideration, it is not a reason why a Protestant should not become a Unitarian, but a reason

why he should cease to be a Protestant ; or, at least, it is a reason why no Catholic should become a Protestant. But it is not merely on an appeal to men's consistency, that I am obliged to rely. So far are the retrenchments, which Unitarianism would make on the traditionary faith, from tending to infidelity, that these very retrenchments are necessary, as I conceive, to prevent infidelity from becoming general. There was a time, when the bulk of the community were not any less likely to believe in Christianity, because it was made to inculcate much superstition and absurdity; and, while this state of things continued, superstition and absurdity in the popular theology were much less injurious ; nay, may have answered good and important ends, in the inscrutable purposes of Heaven. But the hour cometh, and now is, when, if the community cannot have a rational and intelligible religion, and one which they can see to accord with the word of God, they will have *none*. We have no fears for Christianity, provided it be presented fairly to the understandings of men, and in its original purity and simplicity; but we have great fears, we confess, if it is to make common cause much longer with prejudices and superstitions, which the world has outgrown, or is fast outgrowing. Let it be remembered, that France owes to this cause already an infidel philosophy, and other countries in Europe an infidel literature. Some persons, hurried, perhaps, into an extravagant expression, by seeing the progress of Unitarianism, have not hesitated to say, that, if they must choose for the world between this system and infidelity, they would prefer the latter. I do verily believe, that the

period is approaching, when they will be put to the alternative.

In the preceding remarks, I do not concede, in the smallest measure, to the charge, that Unitarians really believe too little ; neither would I be understood to justify believing too little, any more than I would justify believing too much. My only wish is, that this whole subject may be submitted fairly to the arbitration of Scripture ; and that all men may search the Scriptures daily, whether these things are so. For this cause, I have met and repelled the suggestions, often made, respecting the dangerous tendency, even of considering our opinions ; the only effect of which must be, to alarm weak and timid minds, so as to prejudice them in the investigation of truth, or prevent all inquiry.

III. Unitarianism goes far enough for moral effect.

It only remains for me to say a few words in answer to the objection, that we do not go far enough for the moral effect of our doctrines. I am persuaded, that this objection never could have arisen, except from a misapprehension of what is really intended, when we are said to believe less than others. It is not meant that our faith is less confident, or less lively, but only that it has fewer objects. Now, take any of the leading doctrines of Christianity—the parental character of God, for example, or a future retribution—and it will not be denied, that, if this were fully believed and realized, in all its applications to the conduct and life, it would be sufficient alone to produce an entire renovation of character. What is wanted, therefore, to give full effect to the Christian system as a

motive to duty, is, not that it should be made to include a great many articles of faith, but that it should be made to seem altogether credible to us ; so that we may not only assent to it, as something which we are willing to take for granted, but know and feel it to be true, real, and practicable. But will it secure this object, to incorporate into the system doctrines, which are admitted, even by those who hold them, to be offensive to reason, and apparently derogatory to the Supreme Being ? Nay, I ask, with confidence, whether incorporating such doctrines into the christian system must not lessen the practical effect of every doctrine in that system, by rendering the system itself less intelligible, and less probable ?

Perhaps, however, it is meant, that we do not go far enough for the moral effect of the gospel, because we leave out of the system doctrines, which, in themselves considered, are of great power as motives to obedience. A little reflection will convince us, that this, like many other assumptions which I have had occasion to expose, is wholly gratuitous. As a general remark, it may be said, that the distinguishing peculiarities of Calvinism relate to what God, and Christ, and the gospel have done *for* us ; and these are usually coupled with the doctrine, that we can do nothing whatever for ourselves ; and I would just ask, in passing, whether there is anything in such a system pre-eminently favorable to virtue. Is a man likely to do more, for being told that he can do nothing, or that everything has been done for him ?

However, on this point I am willing to go into an examination of particular doctrines, and will begin with the Trinity, simply considered. What is there, that the

Trinitarian believes respecting the triplicate distinction in the Godhead, that can increase, in the smallest possible measure, his desire of holiness? We all believe that God is one being, and we all profess to clothe this being with the same attributes, and it is because he possesses these attributes, that we love him and fear him. The Unitarian, therefore, has the same motives to love and fear God with the Trinitarian, because he clothes him with the same attributes; for, as to the mere metaphysical idea, that God exists without any distinction, or in three distinctions, or in three hundred distinctions, it does not bear in any point on the springs of duty. True, but I shall be told, that, besides the metaphysical, there is also a practical view of this question; that God not only exists, but operates in three distinctions. Admit that he does—admit that, in the work of the christian salvation, he operates in three distinctions; what follows? Are we to be grateful to him because he has saved us *in this particular way*, or because he has saved us? Clearly, because he has saved us; but this the Unitarian believes as firmly as the Trinitarian, and has, therefore, the very same motive for devout thankfulness. Besides, what does the Trinitarian do, but take the prerogatives, which the Unitarian ascribes to the Father alone, and divide them among the three persons of the Godhead? Now I would ask, how there can be more reasons, or more motives, for reverencing and obeying a being possessing and exercising these prerogatives in three persons, than if he possessed and exercised the same prerogatives in one person; especially as it is admitted on all sides that we can affix no idea whatever to the word *person*, as used in this connexion?

Allowing, however, that the doctrine of the Trinity, simply considered, has no force as a moral principle, it may still be contended, that we give up many other doctrines, involved in it, and dependent on it, of great moral influence. It will be said, for instance, that we give up the Atonement; and the belief of this doctrine, whether true or not, must have great influence on men's lives. In a former part of this paper, I stated, frankly, what our views are on this subject; and I would now ask, what any Trinitarian believes in addition, that can have a tendency to make him a better man? Does he believe, that what the Saviour has done and suffered on our account, has so far removed all obstacles to our salvation, that now any man, who is so disposed, can be saved by obeying the gospel? Every Unitarian believes as much; and, of course, we can find no distinction here to the advantage of his opponents. Does the Trinitarian believe, then, that what our Saviour has done and suffered on our account, has so far removed all obstacles to our salvation, that now any man, who is so disposed, can be saved *without* obeying the gospel? Does he believe, that, in some way or other, a satisfaction has been made, or a substitute offered, so that now a man may be saved *without* personal holiness? If he goes to this length, I admit that he goes farther than we do; but it seems to me, I must say, that, instead of having a good, it must have a bad influence on his morals; for the plain reason, that it dispenses with the necessity of regarding moral character as a condition of salvation.

Thus, if my limits would permit, I might go on, and take up every doctrine dependent on the Trinity, and

show, that, if, in a moral point of view, it makes any difference, this difference is in our favor. But I have time merely for the brief consideration of a general remark, often made in this connexion : namely, that the characters actually formed under Trinitarian impressions are more strict, serious, and devout, than those formed under Unitarian impressions. It is far from my intention to deny or disparage the virtues exhibited by many who hold opinions different from ours ; nay, it is freely and gladly conceded, that some of the brightest examples of the christian life are to be found among Trinitarians, both Protestant and Catholic. But, in tracing these characters to the influences under which they have been formed, we are liable to fall into the error ascribed to the Indians, who first discovered the medicinal virtues of the Peruvian bark, in a lake, into which a strong wind had thrown several of the trees from which that bark is taken. Year after year, they continued to resort to that spot, believing that the healing virtues they desired resided only in that lake, to which they had been mysteriously communicated by the Great Spirit. Their mistake consisted in not knowing, that the remarkable properties of this water originated in the infusion of a particular principle, which could exist, and did exist, in a multitude of other combinations. So, likewise, the Trinitarian often traces the moral power of Christianity to those peculiar views of it which he holds, when, in fact, it results from the great practical principles, held in common by him and other believers — principles which may exist, and do exist, in combination with very different speculative opinions. The infusion into every creed, that gives that creed its moral virtue, is the profound

reverence it inculcates for the plain precepts of the gospel: and there is no reason why this may not belong to any form of Christianity, that has ever been professed by sober men; though, I must think, it is likely to belong in a higher degree to a form, like ours, which makes every thing depend on repentance and a holy life.

Besides, I think there is observable in many characters, formed under Trinitarian and Calvinistic impressions, a certain severity and extravagance, from which every one must wish them free; as it makes them less amiable, and lessens their resemblance to the character of our Lord. Now, I think it will be found, that these parts of the character, as they are in some respects peculiar to the party, do in fact result from the party's creed. I do believe, that, in many cases, Calvinism does give a certain tinge to the character, and I do not think the character any better for this tinge, but considerably worse. My observation has convinced me, that a Unitarian may have all the seriousness, strictness, and devotion of a Calvinist without being in danger of having these excellencies reduced and alloyed, in the way I have mentioned. This remark applies particularly to many pious and exemplary females of the Orthodox persuasion; for, though it is a pleasure to me to admit their sincerity, and zeal, and regard for principle, I am sometimes left to regret, that, along with the spirit of their religion, they have also caught a little too much of the spirit of their peculiar creed. When this occurs, it is the more to be regretted, as it is found to interfere with that mildness, and gentleness, and modesty, the principal ornament of woman; and compels us to limit our praise to that which was

once bestowed on Queen Mary, that she was a good tempered lady of an ill tempered religion.

Thus do we answer the objection, that Unitarians do not go far enough; and, as this objection virtually includes every other, if we have succeeded in answering this, we have shown that our principles rest on a sure and firm foundation.

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